MINUTES
COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
CONFERENCE CALL
March 4, 2015

**Wednesday March 4, 2015**
The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) was convened via conference call at 11:00 a.m. by COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott. Gradye Parsons opened the meeting with prayer.

**Roll Call**
The following persons present for all or part of the conference call were:

**COGA Coordinating Committee Members:**
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Leah Johnson
Vince Thomas
Eileen Lindner
Josephene Stewart
Kathy Matsushima
Ginny Rainey
Wilson Kennedy
Larissa Kwong Abazia
Barbara Gaddis
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio

**Excused:**
Heath Rada
Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
Leon Lovell-Martin
Carol McDonald
Marcia Mount Shoop
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Linda Valentine

**OGA Staff:**
Angie Stevens

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Gradye Parsons, who provided an overview of the work that has been done in the search for Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After extensive search efforts and interviewing, the selection committee has chosen Rev. Beth Hessel as the Executive Director. Virginia Rainey lifted up some of Beth’s characteristics that led the selection committee to offer the position to her.

**WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**ACTION - VOTE FOR APPROVAL OF PHS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SELECTEE, Beth Hessel**
COGA is being called to:

1. Vote on Rev. Hessel to be the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society, effective June 1.

2. Vote to approve her request for a paid two-month sabbatical after seven years of service. Though the personnel policies of the Office of the General Assembly includes provisions for sabbatical, Rev. Hessel has made a specific request to record the vote on permanent record.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly:

VOTED to APPROVE Beth Hessel as Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society and the requested two-month sabbatical to take place after seven years of service.

Having no further business, the COGA Coordinating Committee conference call adjourned at 11:18 a.m. with Eileen Lindner leading the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
God works in mysterious ways for the good of us all. I truly believe that. I also believe that God will move our lives in directions we never could have expected if we make space for the Spirit to breathe on our carefully-laid plans. The opportunity to serve as Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society/Director for Church Records and History of the PCUSA is a unique opportunity for me to merge my theological training, my pastoral experience, and my doctorate in U. S. history and use those skills for the strengthening of both PHS and our denomination as we seek to learn from our past and move faithfully forward as a living manifestation of the Body of Christ.

One of my primary goals as the Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society is to increase the awareness of our Presbyterian family – from the General Assembly level to local congregations – of the richness of our history that is preserved at PHS. Having worked in the archives of PHS as part of my doctoral dissertation research on religious issues in the World War II Japanese American incarceration camps and the Protestant missionaries who fought for justice for Japanese Americans, I know firsthand the value of the ecumenical and denominational history PHS works to preserve and share. Having handled and read my grandparents’ missionary personnel files from their years of service in the Philippines, which are stored at the Society, I feel as if a part of my own heartbeat resides at PHS. The Presbyterian Historical Society brims with vivid stories of our faith family that shout to be discovered and shared; these are stories that connect each of us with one another and with the cloud of witnesses that preceded us in the faith journey.

As the new Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society, I will be joining a highly-trained and effective team of administrators, fundraisers, archivists, historians, technicians, and building staff, as well as a creative and motivated Board of Trustees, who are all committed to the flourishing of PHS and our denomination. I look forward to bringing my vision for PHS’s future into conversation with their ideas as we move forward with new and exciting ways of increasing PHS’s visibility and effectiveness. I am also honored to serve as Director for Church History and Records and to work closely with our Stated Clerk, the Rev. Gradye Parsons, OGA, and COGA to help our denomination live more fully into our calling to preserve the peace, unity, and purity of the Church by increasing our cognizance of the gifts of our history.
EDUCATION

Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, TX
    PhD Candidate, expected defense: March 2015
      Committee: Todd Kerstetter (director), Rebecca Sharpless, Gregg Cantrell, Max Krochmal, Greg Robinson (Université du Québec à Montréal)

San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA
    MDiv, 1999

State University of New York at Binghamton
    MA in U. S. Women’s History, 1994

University of California, Davis
    BA in U. S. History, 1992

Ordination: Presbyterian Church (USA) Minister of Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elder), 1999; Presbyterian Church (USA) Ruling Elder, 1984

Interim Pastor Training I & II: Zephyr Point, 1999 & 2000

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (CHURCH)

Grace Presbytery, Texas
    Pulpit Supply, 2010-present

Trinity Presbyterian Church (USA), Mansfield, TX
    Designated Pastor, 2008-2010
      As solo pastor provided all administrative, worship, educational, and pastoral leadership for an 80 member, older congregation in a suburb of a major metropolitan area

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Lynchburg, VA
    Interim Christian Educator, 2005-2006
      Redesigned curriculum, trained teachers, and led programs for children’s Sunday school and Children’s Church, created mission oriented monthly children’s fellowship, and introduced child and nursing parent friendly changes to worship for a 300 member multi-age congregation in a small city

Presbytery of the Peaks, Virginia
Pulpit Supply, 2004-2006

Saint Andrew Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Olathe, KS
Co-Associate Pastor, 2002-2003
Led and grew youth group and women’s programs; staffed women’s, mission, and children's ministries; provided regular worship leadership; preached every other month; taught in adult education program; provided pastoral care for a growing, 300 member diverse congregation in a suburb of a major metropolitan area

Rolling Hills Presbyterian Church, Overland Park, KS
Associate Pastor, 2001
Designed adult education program; taught in adult education program; started mission oriented young adult program; preached 12 times annually; provided pastoral care at a 1500 member congregation in a suburb of a major metropolitan area

Community Presbyterian Church, Vallejo, CA
Interim Associate Pastor, 1999-2001; temporary summer youth pastor, 1998
Staffed youth program and provided intentional interim leadership for session and interim associate pastor search committee for a 200 member urban congregation

Presbyterian Church of Novato, Novato, CA
Seminary intern (f/t) and summer temporary pastor (p/t), 1997-1998
Taught adult education program; provided regular worship leadership; preached monthly; provided pastoral care; assisted senior pastor as requested

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (SECULAR & ACADEMIC)
Texas Christian University Writing Center, Fort Worth, TX
Writing Consultant, 2013-2014

Texas Christian University Department of History & Geography, Fort Worth, TX
Instructor, 2012, 2014 (History Dept. Graduate Student Teaching Award, 2014)
Graduate Assistant, 2010-2013

College Board, Louisville, KY
Reader, Advanced Placement US History Exams, 2013

Randolph Macon Woman’s College, Lynchburg, VA
Adjunct Faculty in American Studies, 2005

San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA
Research Assistant for Ronald White, 1996

Lawson Software HQ, Minneapolis, MN
Coordinator of Continuing Employee Education, 1994-1995
Programming and administrating employee continuing education program for a multinational company; team-taught software and leadership courses
State University of New York at Binghamton
Teaching Assistant, 1993-1994
State University of New York at Binghamton
Research Assistant for Kathryn Kish Sklar, 1993

EXTERNAL FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS
2013 American Society of Church History
Graduate Student Travel Award
2012 University of California, Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Special Collections
James and Sylvia Thayer Short-Term Research Fellowship
2011 Pacific Coast Branch-American Historical Association
President’s Graduate Student Travel Award
2011 Smith College, Sophia Smith Collection
Travel-to-Collection Grant
2011 Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA
Research Fellowship
2009 Austin Presbyterian Seminary, Austin Texas
College of Pastoral Leaders Grant

INSTITUTIONAL FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS
2014 Texas Christian University, Department of History and Geography
Benjamin W. Schmidt Memorial Dissertation Fellowship
2014 Texas Christian University, Department of History and Geography
Boller-Worcester Travel Grant (also 2013, 2012, 2011)
2013 Texas Christian University, Graduate Studies Department
Graduate Student Travel Grant (also 2012)
2011 Texas Christian University, Women’s Studies Program
Women and Gender Studies Graduate Travel Grant
1999 San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA
Alumni/ae Fellowship
1995-99 San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA
Presidential Scholarship
1992 State University of New York at Binghamton
University Fellowship

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE
Church Institutions
2009-15 Grace Presbytery Committee on Ministry sub-committee on Examinations
2005-06 Presbytery of the Peaks, Conflict Mediation team
2003-04 Heartland Presbytery, Mission Committee
2002-07  Advisory Board, Covenant Network of Presbyterians
2001-2002  Young Adult Representative, Covenant Network of Presbyterians Board
1999-2003  Co-founder and leader, Young Adult group of Covenant Network of Presbyterians
1998  Theological Student Advisory Delegate, Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly, Charlotte, NC
1996  Theological Student Assistant to the Moderator and State Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly, Albuquerque, NM

National or Regional Organizations
2014 - present  Membership Committee, Coalition for Western Women’s History
2013-16  Graduate Representative, Coordinating Council for Women in History
2012  Conference Volunteer, Southern Association of Women Historians
2011  Graduate Student Volunteer, Pacific Coast Branch-AHA Conference
1994-95  Recorder, Women Historians of the Midwest

Academic Institutions
2014  Graduate Student Panel, TA/GA Orientation, Texas Christian University
2013  Fellow, TCU Global Outlooks in Higher Education Institute: Professional development program culminating in a 10 day visit to 5 universities in Europe and the European University Association to learn firsthand about issues facing institutions of higher education in Europe and the United States
2011  Organizer of Peer-led Graduate Student Orientation, Texas Christian University
2011  Graduate Student Representative, British History Search Committee, Texas Christian University
1998-99  Capital Campaign Executive Committee, San Francisco Theological Seminary
1998-99  Alumni/Church Relations Director Search Committee, San Francisco Theological Seminary
1998-99  Student Representative, San Francisco Theological Seminary Alumni Council
1996-97  Chair, San Francisco Theological Seminary 125th Anniversary Committee on Community Celebration
1993-94  Graduate Student Advisory Committee, State University of New York at Binghamton

PUBLICATIONS
Peer Reviewed Articles
“How Did Female Protestant Missionaries respond to the Japanese American Internment Experience during World War II?” in Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, eds., *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000* 18, no. 2 (September 2014)
In Progress


Review Essay

Book Reviews
Avel Louise Gordly, with Patricia A. Schecter, Remembering the Power of Words: The Life of an Oregon Activist, Legislator, and Community Leader (Corvallis: University of Oregon Press, 2011) in Pacific Northwest Review, 102, no. 3 (Summer 2011), 151


Marilyn S. Blackwell and Kristen T. Oertel, Frontier Feminist: Clarina Howard Nichols and the Politics of Motherhood (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2010) in Journal of the West 49, no. 4 (Fall 2011), 85

Daniel Martin HoSang, Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) in Journal of the West 49, No. 3 (Summer 2011), 111

Vera Norwood, Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature, in Women Historians of the Midwest Newsletter, 23:2 (April 1995), 5

Encyclopedia Entries


Guest Blog Entry
“A Suffering Christ,” Religion in American History, 2 April 2013, usreligion.blogspot.com

CONFERENCE AND PRESENTATIONS


“The Importance of Cultural Competency for Missionary – Incarceree Relations in World War II Japanese American Incarceration Camps,” Department of History and Geography Fall Research Workshop, Texas Christian University, November 2012


Session Chair, “Staking Claims, Creating Names: Confronting Colonial Christianity in the New West,” Western History Association Conference, Incline Village, NV, October 2010

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS
Grace Presbytery
American Historical Association
American Society of Church History
Coalition for Western Women’s History
Coordinating Council for Women in History
Immigration and Ethnic History Society

REFERENCES

Dr. Todd Kerstetter, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Texas Christian University, Department of History & Geography
Texas Christian University
TCU Box 297260
Fort Worth, TX 76129
817-257-6736
t.kerstetter@tcu.edu

Dr. Rebecca Sharpless, Associate Professor, Texas Christian University, Department of History and Geography
Texas Christian University
TCU Box 297260
Fort Worth, TX 76129
817-257-5645
r.sharpless@tcu.edu

Dr. Judy Austin, Former member, Presbyterian Historical Society Board of Directors
6508 Hummel Drive
Boise, ID 83709-2055
208-327-0058
judyaustin40@yahoo.com

Rev. Michael Thompson, Associate General Presbyter, Grace Presbytery
Grace Presbytery
6100 Colwell Blvd. Suite 100
Irving, TX 75039-3148
214-630-4502
mike@gracepresbytery.org

**Rev. Dr. David Batchelder**, Pastor, West Plano Presbyterian Church, Plano, TX; Chair, Grace Presbytery Committee on Ministry Sub-committee on Examinations
West Plano Presbyterian Church
2709 Custer Rd
Plano, TX 75075
972-596-2415
davidb@westplanopresbyterian
Ms. Loyda P. Aja, Associate Stated Clerk, and Search Committee,
Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society/Associate for Church Records and History
Office of the General Assembly, PC (USA)
100 Witherspoon St.
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Ms. Aja and Search Committee members:

Please accept this letter of interest for the position of Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society/Associate for Church Records and History. I am an ordained teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and a PhD candidate in US History at Texas Christian University.

As a fourth generation Presbyterian pastor and a historian who has not only used the Presbyterian Historical Society archives, but has viewed the papers of missionary grandparents maintained at the Society, I bring a life-long commitment to and understanding of the mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Historical Society. With two decades of experience in both the church and the academy, I bridge both constituencies of the Presbyterian Historical Society and am able to speak the particular language of each group.

I have participated in the work of the denomination at the congregation, presbytery, and General Assembly levels as a ruling elder, seminary student, and teaching elder. I am familiar with the denomination’s polity, history, and reformed theology.

In my pastoral and committee work, I have:

• developed administrative leadership skills,
• engaged in short and long-term strategic planning and visioning,
• led successful stewardship campaigns,
• provided staff development, and
• designed and executed effective educational programs.

I have successfully collaborated with other members of several boards to increase organizational visibility and recruit diverse memberships. My experience in church, academy, and business has also honed my teaching, facilitating, and interpersonal skills. These aptitudes would prove invaluable in the Executive Director’s work representing the PHS, interpreting Presbyterian history, and promoting PHS mission among different communities and constituencies.
As a doctoral candidate, I have a proven record of successful grant writing for my research. Through my efforts I have obtained a major dissertation fellowship, substantial grants from institutions like the Presbyterian Historical Society, University of California, Los Angeles, and Smith College to use their materials, and a pastoral leadership grant from Austin Presbyterian Seminary. I would bring my grant writing expertise and my stewardship campaign experience to the grant development and fund raising work of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

I have editorial experience working as a Writing Consultant for the Texas Christian University Writing Center and on newsletters for several history associations, and have written for academic journals; this work would prove beneficial in planning and producing *The Journal of Presbyterian History*.

As Executive Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society/Associate for Records and History I would bring energy, vision, and a passion for the mission of the PHS and the Presbyterian Church (USA) as well as relational, motivational, and communication skills.

My research for my dissertation on Protestant missionary involvement in World War II Japanese American incarceration camps has taken me to numerous archives. A PHS research fellowship enabled me to spend several productive weeks at the Presbyterian Historical Society in 2011 and 2012. I became familiar with PHS holdings and its fantastic staff, especially Nancy Taylor and former Executive Director Fred Heuser. My experience convinced me that working for the Presbyterian Historical Society would be a challenging and highly rewarding opportunity.

Enclosed for your review please find a copy of my vita. I have attached a list of references at the bottom of my vita. I may be reached with the contact information provided above. Thank you for your consideration of my application.

Sincerely,

Beth Hessel
Monday March 9, 2015
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) meeting was convened at 3:00 p.m. on Monday March 9, 2015 by its Moderator, Margaret Elliott, in the Bluegrass Room located at the Courtyard by Marriot in Downtown Louisville, KY.

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
Larissa Kwong Abazia
Eileen Lindner
Leon Lovell-Martin
Carol McDonald
Marcia Mount Shoop
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio
Virginia Rainey
Linda Valentine, Ex-Officio

**PHS Board Members:**
Louis Weeks

**Excused:**
Heath Rada
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Vince Thomas

**OGA Staff:**
Joyce Lieberman
Kerry Rice
Thomas Hay
Sue Krummel
Toya Richards Jackson
Angie Stevens
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly participated in opening worship, led by Wilson Kennedy led.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the proposed agenda and -

**VOTED to APPROVE the Proposed Agenda, as presented.**

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the minutes from the following COGA meetings:

- COGA Meeting - October 2014
- COGA Coordinating Committee Conference Call - March 3, 2015.

and -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the minutes for the above COGA meeting and conference call, as presented.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott, who provided a report on her work since the last meeting.

Heath Rada, Moderator of the General Assembly, requested support from COGA to discuss his schedule and any needed advice during the course of his term. Seven people, including COGA members, OGA staff, and others will participate in the committee.

Chairs and Executives met in January 2015 in Louisville, KY. This was her first meeting with this group. She felt that the group cares significantly about PCUSA.

COGA member, Kathy Matsushima, was welcomed to the meeting and to the committee. She was unable to attend the meeting in October 2014.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard a report from Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Gradye Parsons.

So much has happened since the last General Assembly. It is the busiest time post-General Assembly that the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) has had. The Stated Clerk expressed his gratitude and pride to OGA staff for successfully working a General Assembly with 1/3 fewer staff.

OGA staff directors among other PCUSA staff have been very effective to assist those in the wider church (check minutes for details)
The Stated Clerk acknowledged Tom Hay, director of OGA’s Church Wide Ministries, for completing the 221st General Assembly (2014) at $250,000 below budget.

OGA’s final 2014 accounting came in under budget. The excess funds will be returned to reserves.

The Stated Clerk announced the hiring of the Presbyterian Historical Society’s (PHS) Executive Director, Beth Hessel. Her planned start date is June 1, 2015. He also introduced interim Director of Ecclesial Ministries, David Crittenden.

The Stated Clerk went to Cuba shortly after the last COGA meeting. He returned to Cuba in January 2015 to meet with representatives from the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba.

Virginia Rainey requested to have members of the Cuban Presbyterian Church added to list of Ecumenical Delegates at the General Assembly. The Stated Clerk affirmed that this was voted at the 221st General Assembly.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from its Moderator, Margaret Elliott, who shared highlights of Moderator of the General Assembly, Heath Rada’s, report of his work since the last COGA meeting (Attachment 1).

The Moderator’s report shared a concern for those presbyteries and others who have recently experienced a church leaving the denomination. Discussion took place about a need for space to grieve this loss. Sue Krummel, Director of OGA’s Mid Council Ministries, would be a good resource for this discussion and will be invited to explore options later in the meeting.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) Executive Director, Linda Valentine, who provided a report on the work of the PMA.

She began her report with a discussion on the matters that have affected PMA recently including the 2013 Youth Triennium, 1001 New Worshiping Communities and Special Offerings. In all instances, the PMA is working to review the errors and implement new processes for future projects.

Linda Valentine continued her report, providing highlights of the work done by PMA’s ministries:

Mission work has focused on migration and immigration. Linda took a trip to Tucson, AZ to visit locations along the US/Mexico border.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and World Mission have been working with Mexican coffee growers to help create income and opportunity to aid in the reduction of migration, which is very dangerous.
COGA heard from Eileen Lindner, who shared an update on the “Educate a Child, Transform the World” Initiative, which was approved by the 221st General Assembly. The goal of the initiative is to touch 1 million children in the next three years. Global expression - Presbyterians are being asked to invest prayers and treasure. The foci of the initiative are early childhood development and dropout rates. Students who drop out of school in the 9th grade have only a 12% chance of holding a job that has benefits or pension. The figure drops to 5% in African American and Hispanic teens. The Educate a Child Transform the World Initiative launches on April 13, 2015.

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General assembly took a brief break at 4:40 p.m.

COGA Vice-Moderator, Jim Wilson, reconvened the meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly at 4:50p.m. Jim invited new COGA member, Kathy Matsushima, to introduce herself to the committee and provide background information on the experience she brings to COGA.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Toya Richards Jackson, Communications Director, who provided COGA with an overview of the work that has been conducted to produce the OGA/COGA self-study. She reviewed the most recent draft on self-study.

The Self Study introduction communicates that OGA is doing well and looking forward to the good things to come. However, the self-study acknowledges the restructuring of the OGA, the struggles that it entailed as well as the continued efforts to live into the reorganization.

Toya provided an overview of the way that the document is structured, describing the intention of the format of the document. The report has been reviewed by the OGA leadership team and edited by OGA editor, Terri Stephenson.

Stated Clerk, Gradye Parsons, informed COGA that the review process began 14 years ago to establish accountability of the agencies to the General Assembly. Each agency is reviewed every six years. The review committee conducts interviews, analysis and surveys, coming to its own conclusion, which is reported to the General Assembly. The committee starts meeting on March 10, 2015.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly engaged in discussion about the OGA Self-Study, with Toya Richards answering questions.

Jim Wilson offered gratitude to Eileen Lindner for her contribution to the report.

Virginia Rainey requested the addition of Presbyterian Historical Society’s (PHS) service to the Church, creating processes to archive important historical documents and items. PHS has also worked to provide the Church and its six agencies with guidance on how to
effectively retain documents for the archival purposes. In addition the work done to achieve the Covenant of Understand would be beneficial to include in the Self-Study.

With no further discussion, a motion was brought to the floor to vote and -

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly-

VOTED to APPROVE the OGA Self-Study to be passed on to the review board with requested changes proposed during discussion.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly engaged in conversation about what COGA members and OGA staff who are hearing about the state of the church.

Sue Krummel, Director of OGA’s Mid Council Ministries, provided some insights on what is being heard and reported to their office:

• Across the geography and across presbyteries there seems to be a reaction against “executive leadership” structure. Presbyteries are voting to do away with the office of executive presbyter. 68 of presbyteries are in transition of some form or doing something new.
• As of 2013, 110 presbyteries have less than 10,000 members. 20-30 presbyteries will join that number once 2014 statistics are finalized.
• About 25 presbyteries have leadership in a combined Stated Clerk/Executive Presbyter role.
• When paid leadership diminishes in the presbyteries, OGA staff becomes the “staff” for those presbyteries.

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was recessed at 5:57 p.m. at the end of executive session with Barbara Gaddis leading the closing prayer and blessing of the dinner.

**Tuesday March 10, 2015**

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was reconvened at 9:03 a.m. by its Moderator, Margaret Elliott. Virginia Rainey led morning prayer.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Gradye Parsons, who reviewed the actions directed to COGA by the 221st General Assembly (2014).

The General Assembly Actions directed to COGA are:
1. Reference Checks between Presbyteries
2. Korean Task Force - The goal of the task force is to help Korean presbyteries to be more effective parts of the Church.
3. Childcare at General Assembly
4. Process for General Assembly Site Selection
5. Reconciliation Project
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed for lunch at 12:00 noon. Jim Wilson led the prayer of the blessing of the meal.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reconvened at 1:34 p.m. in the Bluegrass Room of the Courtyard by Marriott in Louisville, Kentucky. Carol McDonald led the group in prayer.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from the Working Groups, who reported back on their assigned work as follows:

**LUNCH**

**RECONVENE AND PRAYER**

**WORKING GROUPS REPORT BACK**

**WORKING GROUP ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY MATTERS**

**General Assembly Matters**

Dependent Care at the General Assembly

A survey was conducted and the results were reviewed, as well as financial implications and other issues. It is recommended that the per diem amount for dependent care be increased for those in need of support in order to make arrangements. COGA is asking Tom Hay and Deb Davies to determine the best amount to be added to the per diem allotment to cover additional dependent care needs.

The survey results revealed that it is not preferred to bring children to the General Assembly if arrangements can be made at home. It is not a realistic option to provide childcare at GA when most sessions last up to 18 hours. Disrupting children’s routines could impact children negatively, especially with the long hours in non-family care.

Other accommodations will be offered, including comfortable space for nursing mothers and child-friendly areas. On-site childcare will not be provided. However resources for temporary childcare will be included for commissioners to research on their own as part of the application process.

It was recommended that communication materials change the term “Dependent Care,” in order to include commissioners who care for adult dependents. Jim Wilson affirmed that is the language that will be utilized.

There is concern about the legal implications of providing the names of dependent care providers. It is recommended that further inquiries should be made before approval by COGA.

The working group on General Assembly Matters is asking COGA to vote to on the following:

1. Authorize an increase in the amount of dependent care for those commissioners who qualify.
2. Streamline the application process for commissioners in a timely manner.
3. Provide child-friendly space and room for nursing mothers at the General Assembly.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -
**VOTED** to **APPROVE** the increase of dependent care, streamline the application process, and provide child-friendly spaces and rooms for nursing mothers.

Regarding the offering of names of dependent care providers, Tom Hay did confirm that this has always been done, as modeled by Presbyterian Women with their Gathering. Historically, the dependent care providers have been confirmed to be licensed and insured in order to provide the needed care. It is not certain what kind of legal liability the General Assembly would incur in the event that there is a significant problem with the referred provider.

It is requested to seek the advice of the General Council on this matter. Gradye Parsons added that the child protection policy will become part of the Book of Order as of June 2015. It may be important to review this the Book of Order and consult with legal council before a vote.

It is agreed to re-visit in the Fall 2015 meeting.

Assembly Arrangements - GA in 2022

Tom Hay reported to COGA that, according to the Standing Rules, the General Assembly in 2022 shall take place in the Synods of Covenant, Lincoln Trails, Living Waters. OGA’s General Assembly Meeting Services is currently reaching out to large cities in the region, seeking proposals to host the 225th General Assembly (2022). Grand Rapids, MI has expressed interest in hosting. But there is concern that it might be too close to Detroit, who hosted the 221st General Assembly (2014).

Louisville was also a possibility if it is possible to shorten the length of the General Assembly. This brought about a question of the feasibility of shortening the length of all biennial assemblies, which could introduce financial breaks and open opportunities to potential commissioners who may not be available for the longer schedule. Tom Hay has provided COGA with a reference of what a 6-day General Assembly would look like.

COGA agreed that Louisville would not be an option for the General Assembly. Since it is the home of the Presbyterian Center, it would be best to give the opportunity to another host city.

Tom indicated that the Grand Rapids’ proposal could be quite favorable. He noted their enthusiasm about the possibility of PC(U.S.A.) being there. In addition, hotels are very close to the convention center. COGA has agreed to include Grand Rapids for consideration for the 2022 General Assembly.
COGA further discussed the possibility of shortening the length of future General Assemblies. Eileen Lindner agreed that it would be worth considering a shorter General Assembly, not only to open the opportunity to more people, but also a more diverse group of people who may not have the flexibility to take the time off in order to participate. However, there is concern that shortening the length of the General Assembly could pose a challenge to those groups who usually host events in conjunction with the General Assembly (i.e. caucuses and councils). The working group on General Assembly matters will revisit shortening the length of the General Assembly for discussion in the future.

Moderator Advisory (Support) Committee

The working group has reviewed the proposal from the moderator and plans make revisions based on their discussion. They wish to communicate the revisions to COGA in the 4th Plenary.

Certification

The certified working group explored the following provision in the Book of Order:

\[ G-2.1101 - \text{Persons may be certified and called to service within congregations, councils and church-related entities, serving in staff positions. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meeting, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements in a handbook provided by a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly. Names of those who have earned certification through a national certifying body shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly, which will forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.} \]

The working group has identified the following groups:

- Association of Business Administrators
- Presbyterian Association of Church Business Administrators
- Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association
- Presbyterian Association of Musicians

The working group will contact people in those associations to determine the requirements for members of those associations and ask them to share what their certifying requirements are, which needs to be approved by the General Assembly.

There is concern about the inclusion of the word “handbook” in G-2.1101. A national certifying body may not have a handbook, but other resources for preparation for certification.
Once the information has been received, the working group will continue the next steps of their work at the next COGA meeting in October 2015.

**Church Statistics/Manual of Operations**

**Church Statistics**

There is an increasing awareness of the manner in which congregations are being surveyed for their membership (race, etc.). The intention of the working group is to request information in a way that will not make people feel marginalized in any way. An extension of the working group includes a number of people from racial ethnic communities to help with the shaping of the instrument.

The working group is proposing the development of another instrument to go in the same survey packet to conduct a qualitative survey and invite people to provide details to expand on not only race, but also ethnicity so not to just categorize someone as “white” or “black,” etc. when ethnicity is more than white, black, Asian, Hispanic, or OTHER. Any changes to the survey must be approved by the General Assembly.

The benefit of the additional qualitative instrument will be to learn much more about ourselves, as a church, and find that a greater percentage of members fit within other categories.

The Working Group is requesting COGA’s approval for the working group to develop a qualitative instrument in a sustainable and affordable means of analyzing that data. In addition, the working group is requesting approval to conduct a test survey in selected presbyteries on the east coast and west coast in order to determine the survey’s ability to provide people with a way to fully self-identify.

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

**VOTED to APPROVE** the working group to create a supplemental qualitative survey, as requested.

**COGA Manual of Operations**

COGA has been provided with the latest version of the manual and have been invited to review the document in preparation for discussion in Wednesday’s plenary session.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard a report from Louis Week, who provided an update on the work of the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS). Louis highlighted the work that PHS has done to facilitate genealogical research (Attachment 4).
Virginia Rainey added that genealogical research provided by PHS can be done online, where people can request research to be conducted for a cost. This will give access to beyond the walls of the PHS building in Philadelphia.

Audio recordings are being transcribed and transferred to a digital format for online access. Other updates are being made to scan paper documents to be accessed online, as well.

John Wood has been working to review and make changes to some facility services at PHS, including renegotiating utility service contracts and the installation of security cameras.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed a recommendation from the Presbyterian Historical Society to re-elect PHS Board members Jane Alexander Carl, William Marshall and Cheryl Lynn Register for new terms and to elect Ernest Higginbotham for a term to serve on the PHS Board (Attachments 5 & 6).

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the re-election of PHS Board members Jane Alexander Carl, William Marshall and Cheryl Lynn Register for new terms and to elect Ernest Higginbotham for a term to serve on the PHS Board.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Gradye Parsons requesting that COGA approve to elect Laura Polk, Manager for Immigration of Advocacy, for a four-year term as Assistant Stated Clerk and re-elect Deb Davies, Laurie Griffith, Martha Miller, Teresa Waggener, Kris Valerius, Valerie Small and Molly Casteel for four-year terms as Assistant Stated Clerk (Attachment 7).

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the election of Laura Polk as Assistant Stated Clerk and re-elect Deb Davies, Laurie Griffith, Martha Miller, Teresa Waggener, Kris Valerius, Valerie Small and Molly Casteel for four-year terms as Assistant Stated Clerks of the General Assembly.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard a report from Vice Moderator of the General Assembly, Larissa Kwong Abazia (Attachment 8).

Larissa and Moderator of the General Assembly, Heath Rada, have recorded videos that show a conversation between Heath and Larissa, discussing the matters that they have experiences as the most important to the wider church.

Larissa then provided an overview of her experience as Vice Moderator since we last met in October 2014. She traveled to Wabash Valley Presbytery for a presbytery-wide event prior to the presbytery’s vote on General Assembly actions.
Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo believes that this project will effectively communicate with the wider. He recommended that this be subtitled in Spanish and/or Korean for use during gatherings.

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly engaged in discussion the Role of the General Assembly, led by Eileen Lindner (Attachment 9).

Carol McDonald provided some reflection on the work she did on the Committee on the Review of Biennial Assemblies in relation to the overtures from the Foothills Presbytery.

Gradye Parsons suggested that a small group from COGA visit Foothills Presbytery and engage in a constructive conversation with them to discuss the details of the proposed overtures, which will end up as a mutually beneficial exchange. Sue Krummel believes that sitting at the table and listening to what they have to say is a very important step to hear the concerns.

After further discussion, the floor was open for COGA members to volunteer to participate in the delegation to visit Foothills Presbytery. It was agreed that the delegation will include Margaret Elliott, Heath Rada, Gradye Parsons and Wilson Kennedy.

A conference call will take place after the delegation’s trip to Foothills Presbytery to discuss the outcome of the conversation and any necessary next steps.

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly took a 15-minute break at 3:15 p.m.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly engaged in executive session for the remainder of the plenary session.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed at 6:00 p.m. with closing prayer and the blessing of the meal led by Leon Lovell-Martin. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly then gathered for dinner and fellowship at Rye restaurant.

**Wednesday March 11, 2015**

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was reconvened by its Moderator, Margaret Elliott at 9:02 a.m. Marcia Mount Shoop led the morning prayer.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recognized the retirement of Christopher Nicholas in gratitude for his service to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Gradye Parsons, introduced David Crittenden, Interim Director of Ecclesial Ministries, to COGA. David has joined OGA for a six-month term to assist in the transition due to the departure of Loyda Aja and retirement of Chris Nicholas.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tom Hay, who provided an update on the plans for Big Tent, which is scheduled to take place July 30 - August 1, 2015 in Knoxville, Tennessee at the University of Tennessee. There will be twenty choices for workshops, which is significantly reduced from previous Big Tents. There are also several pre-conferences taking place prior to Big Tent’s kick-off.

Those COGA members who are interested in going to Big Tent will notify Margaret Elliott.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tom Hay, who provided an update on the 222nd General Assembly, which will be taking place in Portland, Oregon in 2016.

They are at the technical stage of planning. OGA will start working closely with the Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA) in Fall 2015.

The leadership training will be focused on what it means to be a committee as opposed to the business being presented to the committee. This will offer a better opportunity for the committee to plan the function of the committee work instead of only focusing on the business.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from COGA members who are participating in committees and task forces representing COGA.

**Reconciliation Task Force**

The goal of the General Assembly action is to have reconciliation across the church, asking PMA, OGA staff and board members to visit every presbytery. However, no funds were allocated for this project.

The task force met and has discussed working on a video to provide a fun way to discuss how General Assembly decisions are made. In addition, it is recommended that staff members time while in presbyteries to ask how thing are going. In addition, OGA and PMA staff will be engaging in a 1-day training session exploring effective ways to lead in time of high anxiety.
Reference Checks Between Presbyteries (Attachment 10)

Barbara Gaddis presented an overview on the work of the committee reviewing practices of reference checks between presbyteries. There is a concern that people feel they are being left out of the loop on important information, emphasizing the need for full disclosure between presbyteries.

Sue Krummel shared a concern that stated clerks don’t know exactly who to contact when conducting a reference check. The Office of the General Assembly is working on way to have that information available.

The committee is reviewing the legal ramifications of not giving a full reference check or over-sharing information for a reference check.

Should sexual misconduct be the only question on a PIF requiring information? If it is determined that the content of the PIF form needs to be changed, who would approve the proposed change? Gradye Parsons stated he will confirm who authorizes changes on the PIF form.

There is a reference check workshop at most Polity Conferences.

Korean Task Force

The Korean Task Force will be meeting in May 2015 and will provide a report at the next COGA meeting.

Certification of Christian Educators Task Force (Attachment 11)

Leon Lovell-Martin stated that the task force would have its first meeting via conference call on March 24, 2015. A report will be submitted at the COGA meeting in October 2015.

Stated Clerk Nominating Committee

Carol McDonald shared that the first meeting will take place May 12-13, 2015 in Louisville. December 21 is 180 days prior to the assembly and is also the deadline for those wishing to submit an application for Stated Clerk. The nominee must be announced no later than April 19, 2016. Challenges for those not nominated can be submitted no later May 4, 2016

The person who will be providing staff support for the committee is Ruling Elder Kathy Luchert. Carol has requested the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly affirm Kathy Luchert as staff support for the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee and -

**VOTED to AFFIRM** Kathy Luchert as staff support for the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee.
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly re-visited the revised manual for the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (Attachment 12).

With no further questions, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the revised manual for the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, as presented.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Jim Wilson, who provided an overview of the Moderator of the General Assembly’s request for an advisory committee.

The focus of the advisory committee in support of the Moderator of the General Assembly will be less specific and has been generalized to keep the information higher level in order to transfer from one moderator term to the next.

The Committee on the Office of the will visit effective Vice Moderator Candidate training in conjunction with the Moderator Candidate training in order for them to prepare for the General Assembly, if elected. This will be discussed at the meeting in October 2015.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Margaret Elliott, who requested suggestions for a COGA member to participate in the PMA Board Audit Committee (Attachment 13). Given that the audit committee will conduct work focused on financial matters, including the per capita budget, it was suggested that Eileen Lindner represent COGA for this committee. Eileen has agreed to this nomination as long as there is no conflict since she is the COGA representative for the PMA Board Audit Committee.

With no further questions, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** Eileen Lindner to represent COGA in the PMA Audit Committee.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the future meeting dates for COGA (Attachment 14).

The next meeting is scheduled to take place October 26-28, 2015. Due to the Future Farmers of America convention taking place at the same time in Louisville, there are not hotel rooms available. In light of this, Gradye Parsons has suggested that the October 2015 meeting take place in Philadelphia. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly agreed that the meeting location be changed to take place in Philadelphia.

Having no further items of business, the meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was adjourned at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday.
March 11. Margaret Elliott offered the closing prayer. The committee joined together for casual lunch in the meeting room prior to departing for flights home.

Respectfully submitted,
Angela Stevens
Recorder
MODERATOR’S REPORT  
NOVEMBER 2014 - FEBRUARY 2015  
Heath K. Rada  

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING MARCH 9 - 11, 2015  

This is my second report concerning the past four months of service as Moderator. Like the first report, the time has been “beyond belief”. I am thrilled and also distressed by the happenings in the PCUSA. Thrilled, because I am seeing a new core emerge, as churches and members begin to see their “new” identities in a church that can focus on “being the church”, rather than focus on “defending the church”. And I am distressed because so many churches and members are experiencing the loss of the “old PCUSA” or its predecessor bodies, and not being provided appropriate opportunities to grieve its death, as it reforms into its new being. The demands on the Moderator relative to each of these positions are great. People want to be told about hope, and reconciliation, and new directions. Likewise, many others want to grieve, to express frustration and anger.  
I also see the demands on our General Assembly and Middle Governing bodies - both our GA meetings and our GA staff, and our Presbytery staff as being unrealistic and not manageable. That has absolutely nothing to do with the quality of staff, in my opinion. It has to do with the fact that as an Assembly we are so focused on voting (which by the way when defined, means to “divide the house”) that we often don’t take the time at GA Meetings or Presbytery meetings to “be” the church. It also has to do with the fact that our staff is being asked to operate a church that was supported by 5 million people with the resources from and membership of 1.8 million members. In spite of heroic efforts on the part of management to downsize and curtail various projects, the church still has the same expectations, and thus our people are overworked and expected to perform as if they had the time and resources needed to do their tasks.  
That said, I must add that every trip I make I see new and exciting ministries and services being offered by the PCUSA. We are a remarkable denomination. both nationally and internationally we are doing remarkable work for the Kingdom. We have every reason to feel a deep sense of pride in who we are as a denomination, and how the church is being faithful to our call. It is with gratitude that I have proposed a process to begin the new Advisory Committee for the Moderator, and that Margaret Elliott has appointed this body. With careful planning I hope this body might not only help this Moderator, but set up some processes and procedures that will assist future Moderators to function even more effectively.  
I do wish to give a “health report”. At the last meeting I shared that I had experienced an episode which was diagnosed as dehydration when in Bethlehem. Unfortunately I have had two others - one at Columbia Seminary and another in Wrightsville Beach NC. Tests and visits to doctors have indicated that the Moderator is basically healthy, but the cause of these “episodes” is concerning. At this writing, results of recent tests are being awaited and a plan for action will follow.  
So, it is with some degree of apprehension, but a great degree of gratitude and excitement that I head into the final 3 months of my first year. May God grant me the wisdom, strength and faithfulness needed to fulfill God’s will for the Moderator of the PCUSA.  
Events and Activities of Moderator in past four months (November through first of March 2015)  
Special Events: 100th Birthday celebration of the Presbyterian School of Christian Ed
McIver Lectures in Wilmington NC,
Columbia Seminary Convocation,
Johnson C. Smith’s Convocation and Roll out of new identity
Johnson C. Smith’s Video on Theological Education in the PCUSA
Meeting with Collegiate Students from Duke, UNC- Chapel Hill, NC State,
North Carolina Central, Meredith and Peace Colleges
Board of Governors - Presbyterian Homes of NC
Moderator’s Conference in Louisville
Vice moderator’s visit and video taping in Montreat
United Nations office visit in New York City
Chiefs and Chairs meeting in Louisville

Presbytery Visits
Abingdon
Foothills
Tres Rios
New Hope
Coastal Carolina

Churches Visited
White Memorial in Raleigh
Tenafly New Jersey
Old Bergen Church Jersey City NJ
St. Andrews Boulder Colorado
Montreat PCUSA
Myers Park in Charlotte
Westminster in Greenville SC
Spartanburg First SC
Midland Texas First
University in El Paso
Christ Church in El Paso
Little Chapel on the Boardwalk Wrightsville Beach NC
Westminster in Durham NC

Partner Churches visited
Peru
South Sudan
Ethiopia
Mexico

Heartfelt gratitude to COGA, and to the staff in the OGA as well as in other offices who have offered advice, support, and quite frankly love and care for the Moderator.
Chapter I: Executive Summary

The Office of the General Assembly (OGA) is pleased to report that it is alive, well, and as committed as ever to bringing people together to discern the mind of Christ. The road since the agency’s last in-depth self-study in 2006 has not always been smooth, but OGA leadership continues to navigate through the ongoing challenges, including diminishing resources and fewer staff; decreased membership and shrinking per capita; and a faith community that is wrestling with how to minister to the breadth and depth of the denomination.

The tasks are great, but the Holy Spirit is still guiding OGA to think innovatively and work more collaboratively. To that end, OGA reports its most significant change and accomplishment—a complete organizational restructure. Although labor-intensive and emotionally draining, the restructure resulted in needed cost reductions, the elimination of departmental silos, and improved overall health for OGA. The agency also reports other significant accomplishments, including

- enhanced and more streamlined General Assembly gatherings;
- an Electronic Records Preservation program;
- expanded opportunities for training in immigration advocacy;
- a redesigned examinations process for teaching elders;
- staff support for the Presbytery Leader Formation program, a three-year effort training and coaching program of the Association of Mid Council Leaders;
- a consultation on Interfaith Relationships, which resulted in the development of the Interreligious Stance approved by the 221st General Assembly (2014);
- enhanced external communications and interpretation of the work of OGA’s three ministry areas;
- enhanced visibility of the Stated Clerk through more frequent communications on domestic and international concerns.

The OGA strives to support, sustain, and strengthen the mandate, message, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which is best accomplished through a focus on the church’s ecclesiology. The following chapters in this self-study dive deeper into the core of OGA’s work, examining how the agency relates to the church, its policies and practices, and its coordination with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. There also is a section responding to recommendations made in the previous OGA review to the 218th General Assembly (2008). Finally, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly offers his thoughts and reflections in the conclusion, a glossary provides assistance for certain terms, and exhibits conclude the self-study.

Chapter II: Introduction

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) encourages the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be people of hope—seeking together the mind of Christ; working for justice and mercy in the world; and participating in God’s continual reformation of the church. As the ecclesial arm of the PC(USA), OGA provides support in areas of the church’s governance and structure, and ultimately helps the denomination discern the mind of Christ for direction and decisions.

The OGA is led by the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, who is elected by the assembly to a four-year term. The Stated Clerk is the highest ecclesial officer of the denomination and directs all of
OGA’s work. The tasks of the Office of the General Assembly fall under three primary ministry areas: Ecclesial and Ecumenical Ministries, Mid Council Ministries, and Church Wide Ministries. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) oversees and supports the ministry of the Stated Clerk and staff, and partners with OGA in carrying out work assigned by the General Assembly.

Chapter III: Church Relatedness and Program Effectiveness

The Office of the General Assembly relates to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through its work in three primary ministry areas.

A. Church Wide Ministries

This ministry area focuses on bringing Presbyterians together for decision making and fellowship, ensuring that the diversity of the church’s membership is represented, and preserving documentation of the church’s work. The activities of this ministry area fall into two major categories: General Assembly Meeting Services and the Presbyterian Historical Society.

1. General Assembly Meeting Services

General Assembly Meeting Services (GAMS) brings Presbyterians together through General Assembly (GA) meetings, conferences, and service on GA agencies, boards, committees, commissions, and task forces. GAMS is committed to providing the very best environment possible so participants in these endeavors are safe and supported in discernment; encouraged for building community and worshipping God; and equipped for learning new skills and growing in diversity, enthusiasm, and discipleship.

GAMS administers the largest share of program funds for the OGA in schedule 1 (GA) expenses. The staff takes seriously the call to be responsible stewards of the church’s resources. Among the stewardship strategies in regular play for GAMS are the careful negotiation of contracts, including travel expenses for GA commissioners; the movement away from paper to electronic means of disseminating information; and the use of temporary staff during seasons of high workload.

Providing opportunities and access for service as commissioners and advisory delegates to the General Assembly, as members of standing and special committees and commissions, and as participants in major conferences sponsored by the Office of the General Assembly and its partners, is an important part of GAMS mission and ministry. The GA nominations process ensures that the rich diversity of the membership of the church, particularly racial ethnic and young-adult members, participates in its decision making and contributes to the mission of the PC(USA).

a. Primary Tasks

The tasks of GAMS have to do with both the logistics and the content (business, worship) of General Assemblies and other denominational meetings.

GAMS staff oversees arrangements for the General Assembly, including location selection and securing meeting facilities with space for worship, plenaries, committee work, exhibits, and special events. GAMS works closely with host presbyteries through the Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA). It works with mid councils and the six PC(USA) agencies in the receipt and referral of business before and after the assembly. In the months before an assembly, two temporary employees are hired to help with the handling of registration and assembly business.

Other tasks related to the assembly include

• maintaining a GA website and the PC-biz database of business items;
• providing support for commissioners, advisory delegates, and other participants;
...resourcing the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) in its leadership responsibilities;

• enabling easy access and communication during registration processes through phones (GA Meeting Service toll free direct line) and email (GAmeetingservice@pcusa.org);

• overseeing the planning of worship, plenaries, and special events; providing program books and event apps for participants.

GAMS also facilitates logistical and program planning for other events upon request. These include Big Tent, the Polity Conference, the Moderator’s Conference, 1-1-1 All Agency Staff gathering, Leader Selection and Leader Briefing, meetings of presbytery executives and stated clerks, and meetings of standing and special committees and agency review committees. Facilitation of such events may include site selection, maintaining a registration system and database, and providing websites, program books, and other resources for participants.

By providing support to nomination and appointment processes of the denomination, GAMS works to ensure the participation of a broad spectrum of Presbyterians in discerning the mind of Christ. This task includes support for the General Assembly Nominating Committee (GANC) and for the Moderator of the General Assembly in appointing members of special committees and commissions.

The GANC seeks to identify and encourage Presbyterians to consider service on more than twenty GA-level committees, agencies, and commissions. The committee works in consultation with the staff and elected leaders of these entities to provide an open, fair, and accessible application process. It corresponds and engages with racial ethnic caucuses, affinity groups, mid council entities, clerks of session, and pastors, and on occasion other ecumenical partners, to deepen the pool of persons considered for service.

The GA nominations website offers an electronic application process. A database maintained by the GANC includes records for those currently serving and those who have previously served; specialized reports and worksheets for GA-level entities; reports of persons serving for each mid council; statistical information on race, gender, ordination, and theological diversity; and a comprehensive slate of nominees, including statistical information for commissioners to each General Assembly.

b. Accomplishments

A number of notable GAMS accomplishments have grown out of efforts to practice good stewardship of funds and resources. Adjustments to the GA schedule, when possible, have resulted in substantial cost savings. For example, moving opening worship to the plenary hall saved more than $100,000. Event registration fees have been established to help cover costs of the Office of the General Assembly’s work.

Staffing has been streamlined. In 2013 GAMS eliminated one coordinator (for meeting services), converted one full-time coordinator position to part-time (for GA nominations), and eliminated two administrative assistants (one for meeting services and one for GA nominations).

In an effort to partner with others in practicing good stewardship, each entity whose membership is elected by the GA is asked, as part of the nominations process, to share innovative and creative ways in which it engages its constituency.

Other accomplishments of GAMS over the past eight years include

• evolution of meetings of the General Assembly to be more worshipful and conducive to community;
adoption of a new registration system for the assembly and other events;

movement from paper to electronic means of handling business and communications:
introduction and fine-tuning of PC-biz and meeting apps (Guidebook); replacing printed communications about registration with email and other electronic communications; movement to a paperless system of video-conferencing for the GA nominations process;

providing services for GA participants with disabilities, including wheelchairs and scooters, headphones, real-time captioning on monitors for worship and plenary sessions, American Sign Language interpretation at opening worship, Braille and large-print copies of worship services, and a relief area for service animals outside the convention center;

planning leadership for the first and subsequent Big Tents

developing a streamlined application process for GA nomination(s), including enhancements for sharing diversity information (extension of age-range categories, provision for sharing cultural identity in addition to racial ethnic identity, means to share theological convictions, and ability to note what accommodation is needed for an applicant with a disability);

maintaining a high level of racial ethnic and young adult representation on GA-level entities.

c. Vision for the Future

Moving into the future, GAMS seeks to

• support in every way possible the vision for the Stated Clerk to bring people together to discern the will of Christ;

• continue engaging in the stewardship responsibility of carrying out its work with the least impact on the per capita budget;

• establish a flexible program for using electronic tools—including PC-biz, apps, and video communications—to support denominational meetings;

• continue to ensure the active and full participation of members of the PC(USA), particularly racial ethnic and young-adult members, in the decision making of the church.

2. The Presbyterian Historical Society

As the archives of the PC(USA), the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) is guided by the belief that it is critical to preserve documentation of the work of church members and staff as they come together to discern the mind of Christ and to act for justice and mercy in the church and world. Examining and reflecting on past experiences is an important part of the discernment process. The records that PHS cares for may also be the only vehicle through which past voices, unjustly silenced, can be heard. The PHS is committed to preserving PC(USA) records so that they are available to serve the church in the present and future.

Much of the work of PHS is done in teams. Every PHS staff member belongs to at least one team, and many of the teams involve people from all parts of the organization. This model allows information and ideas to flow across departments and up and down the staff organization chart.

a. Primary Tasks

The PHS collects and preserves records of the church’s work, responds to requests for information, and shares church-related data and history in a variety of ways. The primary tasks of PHS include

• collecting and preserving records of congregations, mid councils, and national agencies as well as personal papers, publications, photographs, and many other types of media that document the Presbyterian and Reformed experience in America;
FOR INFORMATION

- collecting and preserving records of ecumenical and other groups such as the National Council of Churches and the American Waldensian Society;

- sharing Presbyterian history through its website and social media, through *The Journal of Presbyterian History* and other publications—including bulletin inserts for Heritage Sunday and Reformation Sunday—and through in-person tours, events, and workshops;

- responding to requests for historical information from church members, congregations, mid councils, national agencies, and ecumenical organizations;

- overseeing the collection and preservation of OGA statistics;

- overseeing OGA publications, including *GA Minutes*, the *Book of Order*, and the *Book of Confessions*;

- hosting at least two events each year to commemorate an aspect of the historical journey of the Presbyterian church;

- visiting congregations each year to promote PHS and the value of its work;

- participating in national events such as General Assembly, Big Tent, and other conferences sponsored by PC(USA) agencies;

- hosting meetings for volunteers who help with fundraising, participating twice a year in meetings of fundraisers from the six PC(USA) agencies and working collaboratively with them on fundraising matters outside of these meetings;

- communicating regularly with constituents (donors, prospects, congregations, mid councils, professional affiliates, and agency staff) through group and individual mailings, print and electronic newsletters, brochures, publications, exhibits, website, social media, press releases, and emails.

b. Accomplishments

Hiring a new director in 2015 positions PHS to move into the future under strong leadership. For more than a year, following the retirement of the previous executive director in 2013, PHS senior staff shouldered extra responsibilities—and the accompanying stress—in order to further the mission and goals of the organization.

Staffing challenges have led to another accomplishment: creation of a new Records Liaison program to train designated staff “liaisons” in the five other PC(USA) agencies to work with PHS on records management and records transfer issues. This program is an attempt to address a major decrease in records collection from national agencies, which resulted from the elimination of the records manager position. The program has met with some resistance, but PHS staff are hopeful that it will help fill the gap.

Other notable accomplishments include the following:

- Establishing an Electronic Records Preservation program; purchase of a planetary digital scanner, which enabled the transition from microfilming to digitizing records.

- Increasing communication and outreach through a redesigned website and paper newsletter, a new electronic newsletter, the use of social media including Facebook, the use of email communications to PC(USA) congregations and mid council staff, and the placement of feature stories on the PC(USA) website.
• Implementing a security system and energy-efficient upgrades for the PHS building in Philadelphia.

• Developing an improved accounting system.

• Partnering with the Board of Pensions to improve the efficiency and security of information technology.

• Increasing giving to the PHS annual fund by 50 percent over the past five years.

• Signing an agreement in July 2014 that allows Ancestry.com to digitize selected congregational records in PHS holdings from the 18th century through 1970. The project is expected to take several years and will result in making more historical information accessible to greater numbers of people through database sharing. Ancestry.com will scan lists of church members, baptisms, marriages, and deaths found in church registers, session minutes, and other records. The PHS will receive copies of the digital files and the name indexes created to access the records. This will be a big boon to genealogists, since there is no name index currently.

• Developing and expanding the Living History program, which seeks to capture on film the diverse experiences and stories of American Presbyterians. People interviewed for the project include Jerry Van Marter, James Reese, Oscar McCloud, Parker Williamson, Melva Costen, Richard Poethig, Vernon Broyles, Rick Ufford-Chase, Bruces Reyes-Chow, Susan Andrews, Sue Althouse, Don Black, Connie Thurber, and David Gelzer. The entire filmed interviews are preserved as archival records. Shortened, edited versions are posted on PHS’s YouTube channel for public viewing.

• Extending a long working relationship with the Board of Pensions to encompass information technology.

• Practicing faithful stewardship of resources through a successful philanthropy program that honors donor intentions and a stewardship program that keeps donors informed and recognizes their generosity. The PHS has always run a budget surplus and renegotiates all contract agreements every year to get the best price available.

c. Vision for the Future

Moving into the future, PHS seeks to

• increase the awareness of PHS among Presbyterian churches and members;

• provide more resources in digital form through its website;

• maintain high archival standards in its operations;

• improve facilities in Philadelphia to better serve a twenty-first-century archival operation and workforce;

• cultivate and maintain a committed base of donors who will safeguard PHS’s future;

• develop, within the next year, adult-education discussion topics that draw on the Living History interviews, seeking to be more explicit about offering Living History as a model to congregations interested in recording their own history.

B. Ecclesial and Ecumenical Ministries

This ministry area provides support for the work of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and the OGA, while also connecting this work to the larger church and world. The activities of this ministry area fall into three major categories: Ecclesial Ministry, Ecumenical Relations, and Communications.
1. Ecclesial Ministry

This office supports the work of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and carries out various financial and administrative functions of the OGA. Staff in this office seek to ensure that all OGA employees are fairly compensated and have access to health care, pensions, life insurance, and disability. They also seek to ensure that employee complaints are addressed in a timely fashion, with the goal of resolution/reconciliation, and that searches for OGA personnel are done “decently and in order.” This office is guided by the values of cultural proficiency in addressing matters related to power, privilege, discrimination, sexual misconduct, ethics, and policy, as mandated by the General Assembly.

a. Primary Tasks

The primary tasks of Ecclesial Ministry include

- coordinating schedules, meetings, travel, correspondence, and other work of the Stated Clerk;
- coordinating schedules, travel, and budgets of the Moderator and Vice Moderator of the General Assembly;
- communicating with moderatorial candidates and providing training for them prior to each assembly;
- providing staff support for the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) and the COGA Coordinating Committee;
- managing Human Resources functions for OGA, including compensation, evaluation, continuing education, and day-to-day personnel issues;
- coordinating OGA budget and finances (per capita and endowments);
- providing staff support for the Per Capita Table, members of COGA, and the PMA board who oversee the allocation of per capita funds;
- collaborating with PMA staff to plan joint meetings of COGA and the PMA board each spring;
- advising and assisting Hispanic/Latino pastors who are not fluent in English, as needed;
- purchasing office supplies for OGA staff;
- maintaining a library of OGA resources and publications;
- giving oversight to the Sunshine Committee (a community life team composed of staff from each OGA ministry area).

b. Accomplishments

Key accomplishments of Ecclesial Ministry over the past seven years include

- facilitating the creation of a Covenant of Understanding between the Presbyterian Historical Society board and COGA (Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp. 218–21);
- working with two consultants to facilitate a yearlong process that resulted in a new structure for OGA and the downsizing of fourteen employees in spring 2013;
- helping build a relationship of trust between elected committee members (COGA) and OGA staff.

c. Vision for the Future

Moving into the future, Ecclesial Ministry seeks to
• offer training sessions in the area of cultural proficiency;
• create a work environment where every person feels safe and welcome.

2. Ecumenical Relations

Commitments to ecumenicity, unity in diversity, and openness guide the work of Ecumenical Relations (Book of Order, F-1.0402–.0404). The core values that shape this ministry are described in G-5.01 through G-5.05 of the Book of Order, the Ecumenical Stance approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008), and the Interreligious Stance approved by the 221st General Assembly (2014).

Ecumenical Relations staff work in partnership with the PC(USA)’s ecumenical and interfaith bodies and colleagues. Staff also are working on strengthening their relationships with presbyteries and synods through a network of ecumenical and interfaith liaisons. The office is making the transition from a staff team of four exempt and three support staff to one—and-a-half exempt and one shared support staff.

a. Primary Tasks

In all of its work, Ecumenical Relations seeks to hold the vision of unity and relationship with other Christians as a core value of the PC(USA). Primary tasks include

• addressing issues related to the church’s conciliar relationships;
• participating in bilateral and multilateral dialogues with other denominations and faith groups;
• supporting ecumenical work in and with synods, presbyteries, and congregations, as well as other GA agencies;
• consulting on the PC(USA)’s interfaith relationships;
• helping arrange ecumenical and interfaith representation for PC(USA) events and PC(USA) representation for ecumenical and interfaith events;
• providing staff support for the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relationships (GACEIR);
• encouraging Presbyterians to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and to participate in other ecumenical events (e.g., the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 2013 and the first Christian Unity Gathering of the National Council of Churches in 2014);
• producing and/or distributing print and electronic resources such as “God’s Unity—Our Journey: A Study Guide for the Ecumenical Stance,” Ecumenical News (an electronic newsletter), and brochures and resources of the PC(USA) and ecumenical councils;
• maintaining a database of Presbyterians interested and involved in ecumenical work.

b. Accomplishments

Ecumenical Relations has participated in a number of dialogues and consultations advancing unity and understanding among faith groups. Accomplishments over the past seven years include

• facilitating a Consultation on the Future of Ecumenical Relationships in the PC(USA), which resulted in the development of the Ecumenical Stance approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008) (Minutes, 2008, Part I, pp. 516–26);
• facilitating a Consultation on Interfaith Relationships, which resulted in the development of the Interreligious Stance approved by the 221st General Assembly (2014) (Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp. 444–52);
327 • negotiating and signing a historic ecumenical agreement with the U.S. Conference of Catholic
328 Bishops on the mutual recognition of baptisms (Minutes, 2008, Part I, pp. 527–31);
329 • participating in a Consultation on Scripture and Moral Discernment with the Formula of
330 Agreement churches and their partners in the wake of three of the four churches adopting
331 permissive ordination standards for LGBTQ persons;
332 • completing the first dialogue of Presbyterians with Seventh Day Adventists;
333 • initiating and completing an interfaith dialogue with the Community of W.D. Muhammed (in
334 partnership with the Interfaith Office of the Presbyterian Mission Agency);
335 • organizing Presbyterian Travel Study Seminars to the 10th Assembly of the World Council of
336 Churches in Busan, South Korea, and a Unity Reformed Travel Study Seminar to Geneva,
337 Switzerland;
338 • practicing good stewardship by reviewing budget commitments regularly, challenging
339 ecumenical partners to provide matching support, reducing the number of face-to-face meetings,
340 and using electronic meeting technology for smaller groups.

c. Vision for the Future

341 Moving into the future, Ecumenical Relations seeks to
342 • establish an ecumenical education and formation program for the PC(USA);
343 • strengthen ecumenical networks within the denomination;
344 • evaluate changes in conciliar organizations;
345 • evaluate bilateral and multilateral dialogues.

3. Communications

348 The work of Communications is guided by the mission of OGA “to bring people together to discern
349 the mind of Christ.” The Communications office works closely with the Stated Clerk, the staff of the
350 three OGA ministry areas, and the staff of Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) communications and
351 ministries to ensure that timely, relevant, and accurate messages are communicated about the
352 denomination.

353 The OGA’s current director of communications joined the staff in August 2013 and manages two
354 other staff: a coordinator of Web services and a coordinator of technologies. The latter is a new position,
355 created in 2014 to help manage all of the office’s technologies and to be a liaison between OGA and the
356 IT department of PMA.

a. Primary Tasks

358 Striving to accomplish many things despite limited human resources and budget, Communications
359 staff are constantly making choices for the greater good of the church. Their primary tasks include
360 • communicating the mission and vision of OGA;
361 • supporting and communicating the work of the Stated Clerk and the three OGA ministry areas;
362 • facilitating communications for the biennial General Assembly gathering by organizing and
363 running the GA Communications Center, which is staffed by national-office staff and
364 volunteers—an effort involving more than forty people and thousands of dollars;
• publishing *Assembly in Brief*, a free publication available online that gives highlights of the assembly;
• supporting the work of the General Assembly Moderator and Vice Moderator as it relates to communications;
• maintaining Web operations and resourcing OGA’s Web pages;
• maintaining technology functions for OGA;
• writing statements, press releases, and stories;
• creating videos;
• assisting constituents with information and resources;
• communicating with constituents, primarily through the web, mid council databases, and social media.

b. *Accomplishments*

Major accomplishments since the arrival of the current director in 2013 include
• working strategically with OGA’s three ministry areas to enhance communications about and interpretation of their programs;
• redesigning the communications operation at the 221st General Assembly (2014) to include five dedicated news operations;
• developing and filling the position of OGA coordinator of technologies;
• enhancing OGA communications and technology equipment and streamlining management of it so the entire office benefits;
• expanding OGA communications efforts in the area of social media—Facebook and Twitter;
• enhancing the visibility of the Stated Clerk through more frequent communications on domestic and international concerns.

c. *Vision for the Future*

Moving into the future, Communications staff seek to
• continue to unify all of OGA’s communications efforts so they speak to the role/mission of the office;
• develop and implement a project that addresses the departure of congregations from the denomination;
• further streamline and make relevant the communications effort at General Assembly;
• equip OGA to manage its technologies so that the best possible service is given to constituents.

C. *Mid Council Ministries*

Mid councils are critical to the life of the PC(USA); their health both affects and reflects the health and vitality of the whole denomination. Mid Council Ministries focuses on counseling and equipping mid councils on issues related to the PC(USA) constitution, judicial process, social witness, immigration, ordered ministries, leadership development, and inclusiveness. The activities of this ministry area fall into three major categories: Constitutional Interpretation, Ordered Ministries and Certification, and Mid Council Relations.

1. *Constitutional Interpretation*
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A major responsibility of OGA is upholding and interpreting the Constitution of the church. This responsibility falls primarily to staff in the Mid Council Ministries office of Constitutional Interpretation, along with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. Staff in this office are committed to serving the church, primarily through their work with mid councils, in order that “the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness” (Book of Order, G-3.0501). They help Presbyterians seek together the mind of Christ by providing resources for parliamentary assistance and guidance and for discernment.

Staff in this office also help Presbyterians strive for justice and mercy in the world. They work for just immigration, providing mid councils and congregations with legal assistance and advocacy on immigration issues. They also provide resources for mid councils on judicial process and on avoiding sexual misconduct.

Staff in this area seek God’s continual reformation of the church by faithful participation in the councils of the church, providing resources to assist the councils as they live into the new Foundations/Form of Government adopted in 2011. They seek to practice good stewardship by traveling to events with the largest number of participants—for example, attending synod-wide or multiple-presbytery gatherings rather than individual-presbytery training events.

a. Primary Tasks

Along with the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, staff in this office counsel and equip mid councils in constitutional issues, including the training of stated clerks. A restructuring of the office in 2013 eliminated one of three staff persons identified as being available to answer constitutional questions. The remaining two people spend much of their time responding to emails and phone calls, answering constitutional questions from members, pastors, sessions, and mid councils. Ideally, they would like to have more time for resource development, research, and writing proactive pieces.

Staff in this area work collaboratively and in close consultation with one another. They do all of their work with support from one administrative assistant. Other primary tasks include the following:

- Planning and leading orientation for new stated clerks twice a year, usually in Louisville.
- Helping plan and lead Healthy Ministries conferences as part of Big Tent and/or the Board of Pensions regional benefits consultations.
- Helping organize the annual Polity Conference for mid council leaders.
- Posting advisory opinions on constitutional matters (e.g., actions of the General Assembly related to marriage).
- Posting Constitutional Musings on issues being dealt with in the church (e.g., responding to misrepresentations about the denomination).
- Updating the Annotated Book of Order annually, making it available online and as a download.
- Producing a booklet of proposed constitutional amendments following each General Assembly as a resource for presbytery voting.
- Supporting meetings and work of the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC), the Advisory Committee on Litigation (ACL), and the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC).
- Engaging with mid councils on immigration issues, including providing legal resources and advice, interpretation and advocacy, and development of a network of advocates for just
immigration issues. [A second person is being hired to focus on immigration advocacy, so that
the current coordinator can focus on legal resources.]

- Consulting regularly with Presbyterian Mission Agency staff, particularly those in Theology,
  Worship, and Education, on issues related to mid councils.
- Maintaining a website and providing online educational resources.

b. **Accomplishments**

All but two of the staff in this area are new since the previous self-study, so making the transition to
new staffing has been a major accomplishment. Other accomplishments include

- moving from producing mostly print materials to resources that are accessible and available
  online;
- moving from face-to-face training sessions for presbytery and synod leaders to online learning
  opportunities that require less travel by staff;
- expanding opportunities for training in immigration advocacy, including the network
  Presbyterians for Just Immigration;
- planning for an expanded Polity Conference that includes more networking, training, and
  educational options, thus reducing the need for staff and attendees to travel to multiple events;
- preparing a major update of the handbook for presbytery committees on ministry following
  adoption of the new Foundations/Form of Government in 2011.

c. **Vision for the Future**

Moving into the future, staff in the Constitutional Interpretation work area seek to

- develop additional online learning modules for mid council leaders;
- work toward the coordination of all databases in OGA;
- set goals/education plans for staff development in order to increase skills to better meet the needs
  of constituents.

2. **Ordered Ministries and Certification**

The work of Ordered Ministries and Certification, now structured wholly within the OGA (known
previously as Vocational Ministries or the Office of Vocation), focuses on the ordered ministries of the
church, commissioning of ruling elders, and certification of Christian educators, as described in Chapter
2 (G-2.01–.011) of the Form of Government in the *Book of Order*. Prior to March 2013, the Office of
Vocation was a shared ministry between the OGA and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA). In
2013, responsibilities for Financial Aid for Studies and For Such a Time as This (now the Small Church
Residency Program) and primary responsibility for relations with the Presbyterian Committee on
Chaplains and Military Personnel were transferred to PMA, with the remaining work lodged in OGA’s
Ordered Ministries and Certification.

In March 2013, Ordered Ministries and Certification was charged with “resourcing the life of the
church in the mid councils and the ministries of teaching and ruling elder.” This work is guided by
Scripture, the *Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*. Ordered Ministries and Certification staff
seek to discern God’s call and the mind of Christ in particular communities as they help identify and
equip leadership for the church.

a. **Primary Tasks**
This office equips mid councils and individuals for the constitutional processes of ordination as a teaching elder. It provides a framework for call seekers and calling organizations to engage in the call process. It also supports the development of discipleship in ruling elders and educators. The tasks of this office include

- supporting the work of presbytery committees/commissions on ministry (COM) and committees on preparation for ministry (CPM) by providing occasional moderator training in conjunction with the Board of Pensions regional benefits consultations and by hosting gatherings of committee leaders at General Assembly;

- working with the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Exams on the evaluation of ordination exams;

- communicating with call seekers and calling organizations, as well as mid council leaders, through the Church Leadership Connection;

- organizing Face-to-Face events for call seekers and calling organizations;

- overseeing the certification process for Christian educators, including the selection of exam readers;

- working with certifying bodies, including the Educator Certification Committee, to recognize those certified for service;

- sponsoring gatherings such as the Stated Clerk’s Polity Conference, which provides the opportunity for mid council staff leaders to gather with OGA staff leaders to learn about polity issues, share common concerns, discuss the current state of the church, and discern our common life together;

- providing support for inquirers and candidates for ministry, as well as exam readers and mid council leaders, through the Inquirer/Candidate Exam System, “The Land That I Will Show You” blog on broader issues in preparation for ministry, and the “Preparing for Presbyterian Ministry” Facebook page;

- providing support for ruling elders through a luncheon at General Assembly and regular emails to clerks of sessions and others;

- working collaboratively with groups within OGA, including the GA Nominating Committee, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, the GA Committee on Representation, the Ruling Elder Advisory Team, the Permanent Judicial Commission, and the Advisory Committee on the Constitution;

- collaborating with the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC) to develop book ideas and provide bookstores at various events;

- collaborating with other groups to provide a wide range of ministry support (e.g., Presbyterian Committee on Chaplains and Military Personnel, Association of Mid Council Leaders, Association of Stated Clerks, Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, Association of Presbyterian Interim Ministry Specialists, Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers, Administrative Personnel Association, National Association of Presbyterian Clergywomen, Presbyterian Church Business Administrators Association, Coordinating Committee for Korean American Presbyteries, and the ecumenical consortium Professional Church Leadership).

b. Accomplishments
Ordered Ministries and Certification has been able to improve its services to constituents while practicing good stewardship of resources, including staff time and budgets. Technology has been used to increase efficiency and lower costs of resources. Notable accomplishments include

- redesigning the examinations process for teaching elders—moving all five standard ordination examinations online, doubling the number of times exams are offered, reducing the time for reporting results from two months to less than two weeks, eliminating the expense of regional reading groups ($240,000 in program year 2011–12), and reducing the fee per exam by half (from $100 to $50);
- developing a model and platform for online training of exam readers—PC(USA) Training at http://moodle.pcusa.org—that is now being used across OGA for distance education and training;
- integrating the work of what had been two offices (CPM support and Ordination Exams) into a single office;
- developing online video training modules for CPMs and their inquirers and candidates on topics related to the preparation for ministry process and exams;
- revising advisory handbooks on preparation for ministry process and exams in response to 2011 Form of Government revisions and move to online exams;
- implementing an electronic process for educator certification that eliminates the use of paper except for the certificate itself;
- adopting software platforms that enable the Educator Certification Committee to meet and do most of its work electronically;
- developing a website of resources for ruling elders, including Regarding Ruling Elders: A Monthly Series for Serving Faithfully, which has received a positive response from both ruling and teaching elders;
- completing in 2013 a revision of the Church Leadership Connection system that improves the search process to increase the ministry compatibility of call seekers and calling organizations;
- expanding Face-to-Face events to include a larger variety of positions, educational components, and coaching;
- developing support for small congregations and tentmaking ministers to promote understanding and embracing the practice of bi-vocational ministry;
- improving the work of COMs by offering leadership development workshops that emphasize organizational health, flexibility, and visioning based upon mission strategies;
- equipping teaching elders and candidates to serve the twenty-first-century church more effectively by diversifying their preparation process, developing their skills as transformational leaders, and helping them live more fully into their leadership narratives;
- reducing the costs of providing leadership for mid council events by encouraging presbyteries to offer training electronically or in partnership with one another, by placing introductory-level training events online, by scheduling group meetings concurrently, and by encouraging groups to meet electronically whenever possible, while continuing to recognize the value of meeting face-to-face.

**c. Vision for the Future**

Moving into the future, Ordered Ministries and Certification seeks to
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• provide additional web-based training resources for church leaders;
• help staff the COGA Task Group to Study and Report on the Future of the Certification of Christian Educators; facilitate efforts to adapt the educator certification process to fit the needs of the church today;
• expand resources for ruling elder ministries, with the help of the newly formed Ruling Elder Advisory Team;
• develop leadership competency assessment tools for call seekers;
• improve support systems to assist mid councils in moving from places of conflict to places of healthy ministry;
• review denominational support of commissioned ruling elders, leaders of nontraditional worshiping communities, and others who are providing pastoral leadership without being ordained as teaching elders;
• review standard ordination exams to provide forms of assessment beyond the current “60-minute essays”;
• Plan and implement a new structure for the Stated Clerk’s Polity Conference that allows it to be held concurrently with other national events sponsored by Mid Council Ministries.

D. Mid Council Relations

The director of Mid Council Relations is a shared position with the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA). One of the mandates that guide its work, particularly in the area of representation, is G-3.0103 of the Book of Order: “The councils of the church shall give full expression to the rich diversity of the church’s membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision making and employment practices.” The values of this office include the conviction that all members have gifts to contribute, that some have been called to serve in mid councils and elsewhere because of these gifts, and that we accomplish the work best when we work together with respect and trust.

1. Primary Tasks

The major tasks of Mid Council Relations facilitate the sharing of information between the national church and the mid councils in both directions. These tasks include

• providing professional and administrative services to two mid council commissions (2010–14) charged with addressing the role and function of synods and presbyteries;
• supporting synods in their development of plans to merge, change boundaries, or otherwise reconfigure, as authorized by the 221st General Assembly (2014);
• conferring with synod executives and members of the mid council commission as they visit synods and work on the reconfiguration plan;
• helping facilitate a reconciliation effort called for by the 221st General Assembly (2014) by offering online resources and working the reconciliation theme into conferences and visits to mid councils;
• supporting the Presbytery Leader Formation program, a training program for new presbytery leaders of the Association of Mid Council Leaders;
• communicating with the mid councils through a biweekly newsletter and personal contacts as well as at national and regional meetings;
collaborating with PMA and with the other four PC(USA) agencies as their work impacts the work of mid councils;

planning the annual Polity Conference, which brings together presbytery leaders (primarily paid staff) and the annual Moderators Conference, which brings together the elected leaders of presbyteries;

maintaining a current database of mid council staff and leaders;

leading retreats, giving presentations, and consulting with presbyteries and synods on developing staffing rationales in a diminishing economy;

serving as a resource to synods and presbyteries on representation issues;

working with the General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR) to organize a biennial training event for members of synod committees on representation (most recently in 2013).

2. Accomplishments

The Mid Council Relations office has been in transition recently, as the former director retired in late 2013 and a new director came on board. Another change occurred in 2013 when the restructuring of the OGA moved responsibility for committees on representation into this work area. Besides making these transitions, the accomplishments of Mid Council Relations over the past seven years include

- developing and managing (in partnership with the Association of Mid Council Leaders) Presbytery Leader Formation, a three-year program offering monthly professional coaching sessions for new presbytery executives and their counterparts, which has trained approximately sixty presbytery leaders and received universally positive feedback since its inception six years ago;

- helping increase participation in the Moderators Conference to as many as 100; modifying the event to focus on leadership formation and leading change in mid councils;

- completing (in 2013) a total revision of the search manual for mid councils, adding updates on how to use electronic technology in searches for council positions;

- creating a more comprehensive manual for GACOR to include material eliminated in the new Foundations/Form of Government adopted in 2011;

- helping revise other GA documents affected by changes in the 2011 Form of Government;

- helping GA commissioners successfully navigate the legislation process in order to retain representation functions at mid council levels;

- refocusing the 2013 biennial training event for synod CORs to include Bible study and resources aimed at helping participants generate creative approaches to representation within their own contexts;

- developing a new print brochure and logo for GACOR.

3. Vision for the Future

Moving into the future, Mid Council Relations seeks to

- incorporate the theme of reconciliation into conferences and training events for mid council leaders;

- expand the resources available on a website created to support the reconciliation effort (http://oga.pcusa.org/section/ga/ga221/ga221-reconciliation/);
• continue to support the synod reconfiguration process;
• facilitate a discussion of how the church should be structured, since the current structure no longer functions as originally intended;
• share information with PC(USA) staff at the national level about the realities of working in a presbytery office;
• improve communication among the church’s mid councils and national offices;
• merge the 2015 biennial training event for synod CORs with the Polity Conference, making the event open and more accessible to paying attendees from mid councils (non-COR members) in order to remain sustainable.

Chapter IV: Policies and Practices

A. Personnel and Staff Development Policies

There is an employee handbook for the Office of the General Assembly, which includes sections on affirmative action, employment practices, recruitment and selection, performance management, compensation, benefits, standards of conduct, employee complaints, safety and health, separation from employment, and general information about working at the Center.

A staffing rationale is presented to COGA each year and all new positions are approved by them. The personnel functions, including for PHS, are handled by the director of the ecclesial ministries. The compensation system is guided by the underlying principles outlined in the Churchwide Compensation Plan and Churchwide Compensation Policy Guidelines.

There are currently fifty-three full-time permanent OGA employees, six part-time employees, and three volunteers. Demonstrating the church’s commitment to diversity, there are 37 women and 17 racial ethnic persons who make up the agency’s workforce. Many members of the OGA staff are much in demand as speakers on a wide variety of topic areas, reflecting the credentials and expertise brought to their positions.

Each employee is reviewed annually, and staff development opportunities are available to all employees. Employees in OGA are encouraged to take advantage of continuing education, professional development, and regular college or seminary classes. A tuition reimbursement program is available to be used toward degree programs.

A Sunshine Committee, comprised of two members from each ministry area, works throughout the year to provide social/fellowship opportunities for staff. Generally one event is held each month, with the major events being a summer picnic and Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. Each employee’s birthday is also acknowledged.

A prayer board is available in OGA for employees to write their prayer concerns for the staff to see and prayer circles are held for people in crisis situations. These times of intercession are also held for elected leaders.

B. OGA Involvement in the Center Activities

The OGA staff works in collaboration with various programs and work areas in the other agencies. Examples are: Legal/Foundation/Board of Pension attorneys, Theology and Worship, the Ecumenical Staff Team, the Public Policy Advocacy Team, and an ad hoc group working on misconduct policies and prevention in the church.
Weekly worship services are held for Center employees and OGA is asked to provide the worship leaders regularly. Attendance at these brief services is voluntary. Often when permanent committees and task forces are in the building, the members either lead in worship or attend these services.

Employees in the Office of the General Assembly participate in every committee within the Center—Funds for the Arts, Metro United Way, an annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, building-wide Pandemic Flu Committee, and other health/safety concerns. Staff members from the OGA teach “Presbyterian 101 and 102” courses to employees and are vitally connected to the life and witness within the Center.

C. **Budget and Audits**

All costs of the Office of the General Assembly are funded through the per capita budget. Also included in this budget are the following: General Assembly meetings, expenses of the permanent and special committees of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Mission Agency meetings, expenses for memberships in ecumenical bodies, and the costs charged to OGA for building operations and centralized accounting services. Producing and publishing the church’s Constitution and other documents and the cost of administering ordination exams are also included in the per capita budget.

The rate per church member is approved at each assembly and the current rate for 2014 is $7.02 per member, with the total apportionment income budgeted to be $12,983,462. The per capita rate is adjusted at each assembly. The money comes to the national headquarters through the presbyteries.

The per capita budget is the responsible way for the entire Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) community to share equally in the cost of funding coordination and evaluation of mission; and of performing ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a Reformed Church. This system allows the church to do much more together for the sake of the gospel than could be done separately.

Budgets for the OGA are approved by the General Assembly and are audited as part of the 2014 budget, in March 2015.

Chapter V: Committee on the Office of the General Assembly

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) is composed of fourteen elected members, plus the Moderator of the General Assembly (as outlined in the 2008–2009 COGA Manual of Operations). The Vice Moderator of the General Assembly, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA), and vice chairperson of PMA serve as corresponding members of the committee, with voice but no vote.

The COGA meets twice a year, and may schedule a third meeting every other year during the General Assembly. The spring meeting of COGA is a joint meeting with the PMA executive committee. This has enabled the two bodies to better coordinate their work and eliminate duplication of efforts. In the fall of every other year, COGA meets jointly with the Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

A. **Primary Tasks**

The COGA is charged with oversight of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA). A major portion of the work of COGA revolves around arrangements for the biennial meeting of the General Assembly. The committee is responsible for recommending the docket of the assembly, which includes all of the business, worship, and special events. Members of COGA are intentional about developing a docket that reflects the purpose of the General Assembly and shows that GA is not primarily a political convention but a gathering to discern God’s will. They believe that the content of the docket is key to shaping the experience of commissioners, advisory delegates, and other attendees. The COGA also works with PMA to plan the program for Big Tent gatherings in the years between assemblies.

Other GA-related responsibilities include
• recommending date and place of assembly meeting six years in advance;
• coordinating themes and programmatic aspects of each assembly session;
• recommending referral of items to assembly committees;
• assisting the Moderator of the General Assembly in the appointment of assembly committee moderators and vice-moderators;
• consulting with the Moderator in the planning of assembly worship;
• reviewing requests for events held during assembly sessions;
• preparing and distributing to commissioners a report on the docket and referral of business items;
• proposing a per capita budget and making recommendations to commissioners concerning financial implications as they relate to the per capita budget;
• setting amount of per diem for assembly meeting;
• reviewing evaluation of assembly meeting.

The COGA’s responsibilities for oversight of OGA and the Stated Clerk include

• reporting to each General Assembly on the work of the OGA and the Stated Clerk;
• reviewing annually the work of the Stated Clerk and conducting an end-of-term evaluation or exit interview (see Standing Rule H.2.b.(3)(f));
• administering the per capita budget and its interpretation to the denomination; reviewing budget requests submitted by the Stated Clerk for that portion of the per capita budget administered by the Stated Clerk;
• providing support and oversight for the Stated Clerk in personnel decisions; approving proposed changes in the staffing design of OGA;
• consulting with the Stated Clerk regarding persons being recommended for election to the office of Associate Stated Clerk of the General Assembly or appointed to the office of Assistant Stated Clerk (see Standing Rule H.2.d.);
• consulting with the Stated Clerk on proposed amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly (see Standing Rule L.1.);
• overseeing work mandated by the General Assembly between assembly meetings; reviewing the work of special committees and reporting on their work to each session of the General Assembly;
• supporting OGA staff, particularly as they are called to take on demanding tasks and make difficult decisions.

B. Accomplishments

In recent years, COGA members have been called on to support the work of the church in challenging situations—for both OGA and the wider PC(USA). The committee provided leadership and support during the process that culminated in the restructuring of the OGA in spring 2013. COGA members shared their observations, ideas, and suggestions with the consultants who guided the restructuring and gave support to the Stated Clerk and Associate Stated Clerks as they made difficult decisions, particularly regarding the downsizing of personnel. They helped celebrate the ministry of staff
members whose positions were eliminated, acknowledging gratitude for their contributions as they concluded their work with OGA.

At the 220th General Assembly (2012), COGA issued a statement to the assembly seeking to address concerns regarding the resignation of the Vice Moderator. The COGA communicated its strong affirmation of the decision to hold the 221st General Assembly (2014) in Detroit, following that city’s declaration of bankruptcy. Recognizing the unique opportunities offered by the Detroit location, the committee included time on the assembly docket for participants to wrestle with issues of race and diversity.

Other accomplishments by COGA members over the past seven years include

- preparing an ethics policy for General Assembly commissioners and advisory delegates that was approved by the 221st General Assembly (2014) (Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp. 198–201);
- fostering civil conversation and deeper understanding of controversial issues by scheduling plenary time at the 221st General Assembly (2014) for discussion of same-sex marriage and the Middle East, two major issues being voted on by commissioners;
- negotiating a revised covenant of understanding with the Presbyterian Historical Society (Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp. 218–21);
- participating in ecumenical dialogues with the Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Episcopal Church;
- representing the PC(USA) at two Presbyterian General Assemblies in Ghana;
- participating in the second Mid Councils Commission as it addressed the role, number, and functions of synods (four COGA members served on the commission);
- providing oversight for the Committee to Review Biennial Assemblies and sending the committee’s recommendations to the 221st General Assembly (2014) (Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp. 173–90);
- supporting the GA Moderator and Vice Moderator by advising them on procedures and helping them in their roles.

C. Vision for the Future

In all of its work, COGA strives to reaffirm the call to bring Presbyterians together to discern the mind of Christ. COGA members see themselves as working hard to be the church, not just to serve the church or accomplish a list of tasks. Their service is motivated by faithfulness to Christ.

Moving into the future, COGA seeks to

- set aside time for conversations as a committee about the larger context of its work as it affects the role of the General Assembly in the church today, and what COGA is called to do to support that role;
- structure COGA meetings to emphasize a devotional and prayer component as well as business; model for the wider church faithful discernment and shared communal spiritual life;
- visibly demonstrate how to accomplish tasks using a variety of gifts;
- relate to the OGA staff in a more hands-on way by participating in decision making;
- reinforce a vision for healthy balance as staff struggle to do more with fewer resources; remind staff that they can’t be everything to everyone;
FOR INFORMATION

- support efforts to break down barriers and build connections at General Assembly through ecumenical and interfaith dialogues, and in other ways;
- seek to identify and take advantage of opportunities that are unique to the location of General Assemblies (e.g., building conversations about race and diversity into the program of the 221st General Assembly (2014) in Detroit);
- encourage participation in worship in the context of Bible study at General Assembly by having commissioners and advisory delegates gather in their committees for worship and Bible study on Monday and Tuesday at the 222nd General Assembly (2016) in Portland;
- work with staff and GA Committees on Local Arrangements to seek ways of providing childcare at future General Assemblies;
- broaden conversations with potential host presbyteries to ensure their commitment to hosting a General Assembly as part of the site selection process;
- seek ways to tweak the annual statistical report to measure congregational vitality in ways other than church membership.

D. Considering Ecclesiology in a Dynamic Context

At its first meeting in 2012, the Committee on the General Assembly began to consider a variety of questions related to the nature of the church in the context of a rapidly changing religious landscape and a culture undergoing substantial organizational reconfiguration. Since the mid-twentieth century, decline in church membership has been documented first in relation to mainline Protestant traditions and in more recent decades in virtually all major Protestant and Catholic traditions. Today some 84 percent of all congregations report a plateauing or decline in membership. Membership is not the only metric of church decline. Church attendance, financial contributions, capacity to maintain church-related schools, camps, publications, and the like have similarly declined. Denominational organizations have likewise experienced various degrees of diminution, in some instances as a consequence of congregational decline and in some cases independent of congregational factors. Decline in budgets and national staff provide one benchmark of such organizational decline, but perhaps more disturbing is the seeming inability of denominational structures to foster organizational identity, unity, and common mind. It was these latter questions that led COGA to ponder where the church counsels with itself in a cultural context that disadvantages large, multilayer organizational life in favor of smaller, decentralized, and locally centered structures.

Initially reviewing quantitative and theoretical studies from the social sciences, COGA found its locus of interest and inquiry centered around questions of ecclesiological understandings. The COGA decided to commit itself to a time of discernment about our current ecclesial conceptions and concerns at each of its meetings with particular attention to the functions of the General Assembly. Utilizing the learnings gained through the work of its Biennial Review Committee, COGA then repaired to our foundational documents to guide the discussion. In turning to the Book of Order, the group found substantial grounding and substance for its reflection.

In F-1.01, Chapter One—The Mission of the Church, we speak of God’s mission.

The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God’s mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God’s love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God’s mission.

In its deliberation, COGA was further instructed by reviewing “The Calling of the Church,” F-1.03:
The Church is the body of Christ. Christ gives to the Church all the gifts necessary to be his body. The Church strives to demonstrate these gifts in its life as a community in the world (1 Cor. 12:27–28):

The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.

The Church is to be a community of hope, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. This new creation is a new beginning for human life and for all things. The Church lives in the present on the strength of that promised new creation.

The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down.

The Church is to be a community of witness, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God’s transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord.

Perhaps most instructive to COGA’s on-going discussion was the deep insight provided regarding F-1.0301 Continuity and Change and F-1.0404 Openness:

F-1.0301 Continuity and Change

The presbyterian form of government set forth in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is grounded in Scripture and built around the marks of the true Church. It is in all things subject to the Lord of the Church. In the power of the Spirit, Jesus Christ draws worshiping communities and individual believers into the sovereign activity of the triune God at all times and places. As the Church seeks reform and fresh direction, it looks to Jesus Christ who goes ahead of us and calls us to follow him. United with Christ in the power of the Spirit, the Church seeks “not [to] be conformed to this world, but [to] be transformed by the renewing of [our] minds, so that [we] may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

F-1.0404 Openness

In Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all creation, the Church seeks a new openness to God’s mission in the world. In Christ, the triune God tends the least among us, suffers the curse of human sinfulness, raises up a new humanity, and promises a new future for all creation. In Christ, Church members share with all humanity the realities of creatureliness, sinfulness, brokenness, and suffering, as well as the future toward which God is drawing them. The mission of God pertains not only to the Church but also to people everywhere and to all creation. As it participates in God’s mission, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) seeks:

- a new openness to the sovereign activity of God in the Church and in the world, to a more radical obedience to Christ, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work;
- a new openness in its own membership, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, ethnicities, and worldly conditions, made one in Christ by the power of the Spirit, as a visible sign of the new humanity;
- a new openness to see both the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God’s activity in the world; and
- a new openness to God’s continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be more effective in its mission.

The COGA has now put into place a committee to recommend ways in which the insights garnered from its own study over the past three years might find conjunction with our planning for the 222nd General Assembly (2016) in Portland, Oregon.

Chapter VI: Responses to Recommendations to the 218th General Assembly (2008)

[Recommendations in italics, responses in roman.]

1. The Committee on Review recommends that the OGA seek and use more volunteers in times of peak workload and where particular experience and expertise are needed. An example of the latter would be the work of Vernon Broyles, a longtime member of the national church staff, in the area of social witness.
The OGA has made a conscious effort to utilize volunteers wherever possible, and has increased its number of volunteers since the last self-study when it reported one part-time volunteer. The office currently has three volunteers. It also continues to make full use of numerous volunteers to assist with the operation of General Assembly gatherings.

2. The committee recommends that the OGA expand conversations with other denominations for the purpose of sharing best practices.

The OGA has expanded its collaboration with various ecumenical partners, and maintains leadership positions in a number of ecumenical bodies. The office is in regular contact with other denominations both through OGA’s director for ecumenical relations and the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. As previously noted, among other things, OGA facilitating a Consultation on the Future of Ecumenical Relationships in the PC(USA), which resulted in the development of the Ecumenical Stance approved by the 218th General Assembly (2008).

3. The committee recommends that the joint OGA-GAC Office of Vocation address disparities in the ordination examination process. Concerns include the need for increased sensitivity to racial ethnic candidates in the way the exams are created and read. The committee further recommends the development of procedures for recruiting and training readers that remedy these concerns.

In response to both the 218th General Assembly (2008) review of the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC) and the General Assembly Special Committee to Review the Preparation for Ministry Process and Standard Ordination Examinations [created by 220th General Assembly (2012), reporting to and recommendations acted upon by 221st General Assembly (2014)], Mid Council Ministries (formerly “Office of Vocation”) staff and the PCC have made reviews of both the exams themselves (including a review by members of the Advisory Committee on Racial-Ethnic Concerns) and trends in evaluations received by different racial ethnic groups [summarized in the 221st General Assembly (2014) special committee report, Minutes, 2014, Part I, pp. 376–86]. The PCC is currently giving special attention to inclusion of resources originating in racial ethnic communities in the training materials for examination readers. Each year presbyteries are reminded to give particular attention to inclusion of racial ethnic persons in their election of examination readers.

4. The committee applauds the progress OGA has made in using electronic communication as a means of disseminating information. We recommend that OGA either develop its own Web site or that a way be found to guarantee faster dissemination of time-sensitive information generated by OGA on the PC(USA) Web site administered by the GAC.

The OGA has developed its own web site, which is accessible directly and through the PC(USA) main site. The OGA’s site is multilayered and represents news and information from the Stated Clerk, the Moderator and Vice Moderator, and all three main ministry areas. The COGA also is represented, as well as various committees under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly. The site is updated daily by the web services manager, three OGA program assistants, and the director of communications. Additionally, OGA has expanded its dissemination of information into social media. The office maintains both Twitter and Facebook pages, and also contributes regularly to the PC(USA) social media sites.

5. The committee recommends that the Web be utilized as a means of making available OGA’s vast library of position papers, study documents, General Assembly reports, etc. to a larger constituency and that the Constitution be available in a user-friendly and accessible format.

As noted above, OGA now maintains its own web site. Among the items featured and available to the public are numerous documents of the denomination. Many of these items can be found easily from the Documents and Resources tab at the top of all main OGA pages. Sections in this tab include “Manuals and Policies,” “Publications and Periodicals,” “Liturgy and Worship Aids,” and “Reports and
Study Guides.” Most of the materials, including the Book of Order and the Book of Confessions, are available for download.

6. The committee recommends the development by OGA of a reliable system, perhaps Web-based, for forwarding information to pastors and congregants.

The OGA maintains and utilizes an electronic listserv to communicate with pastors and congregations when needed. Recognizing its role in relationship to mid council bodies, however, OGA has a policy in place limiting the amount of e-communications via the listserv it can make a year to congregations to no more than once a quarter and upon the approval of the Stated Clerk. Mid council bodies also receive copies of all listserv communications that go out to pastors and congregations.

7. The committee acknowledges and underscores the importance of the per capita apportionment as an essential and joyful affirmation of belonging both to the PC(USA) and the church catholic, as well as an equitable opportunity for all Presbyterians to responsibly support mission coordination and ecclesiastical expenses. Therefore, the committee recommends an expanded effort to interpret and clarify the purpose and use of the per capita apportionment by means of various media including the PC(USA) Web site.

The OGA maintains a prominent place on its web site for information about per capita. A designated tab appears at the top of all main OGA web page directing visitors to more in-depth information regarding per capita. Per capita rates going back to 2010 are listed, and downloadable per capita leaflets are there to help congregations, presbyteries, and synods interpret per capita.

8. The committee recommends that OGA with COGA strengthen its long-range planning process and document a three- to five-year plan.

The Office of the General Assembly secured the services of two management consultants who helped guide OGA leadership and staff through a two-year-long evaluation and planning process. The process was shaped into five steps—Discovery, Fiscal Options Development, Structure Options Development, Human Resource Allocation, and Next Steps. Key outcomes resulted from that process, including the development of Core Competencies (See Exhibit 5) for the office and strategic goals for the future. In many ways OGA is still living into this new future, but the office is well-positioned for the future. The final report from the consultants is available in Exhibit 6.

9. The committee’s most challenging recommendation addresses the fact that our denominational structure includes two entities with overlapping responsibilities—OGA and GAC. The committee affirms the steps that have been taken toward synthesis and cooperation between these agencies, most notably through the joint offices for vocation and middle governing body relations. At the same time, however, the Review Committee cannot ignore evidences during the period of review of turf conflict, inefficiencies due to duplication of effort in the dual nature of the system, and substantial public confusion of OGA and GAC roles. It is not our place to suggest a new structure. Even so, we strongly recommend that both agencies increase their commitment to communication and cooperation, find ways to speak with a clear and singular voice, and continue to identify areas such as social witness, theology, and leadership development where joint offices could be established.

The OGA believes there continues to be a role within the structure of the denomination for both the Office of the General Assembly and the GAC (now the Presbyterian Mission Agency.) And while it is true that some of their work overlaps, OGA has a unique and necessary role to bring people together to discern the mind of Christ. The OGA maintains its commitment to working collaboratively with the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and has worked intentionally toward this aim. The OGA’s directors often liaise with their PMA counterparts, and staff from both entities jointly support efforts such as the Middle East Staff Team and the Church Developments Table. The OGA seeks every opportunity to find mutual ways we can serve the church hand-in-hand with PMA.
10. Pending acceptance of the recommendation from the GAC Review Committee seeking a joint review of all the agencies, the committee recommends that the review process of individual agencies be delayed until 2010 and that COGA, in consultation with the agencies, evaluate the “Standards of Review” and the manual built on these standards before the next cycle of review commences. The committee further recommends that the revised manual specify that each agency be required to complete its self-study and present it to its review committee within 120 days of the close of the General Assembly at which that committee is elected. [Our committee was not able to begin its work until more than nine months after it was elected.]

This recommendation was completed as written.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

Vision Statement 2008–2012:

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Office of the General Assembly will:

- Encourage the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a people of hope—seeking together the mind of Christ;
- working for justice and mercy in the world; and
- participating in God’s continual reformation of the church.

The Office of the General Assembly is led by its excellent committee of oversight, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. The OGA is staffed by an incredibly dedicated staff who work to serve the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the world it serves. It is my pleasure and honor to work with these talented people.

The years since 2006 have been times of historic changes in the PC(USA). It would have been hard to imagine in 2006 the significant markers that would define the church we are today. Allow me to name a few:

1. After almost a ten-year effort, the PC(USA) approved a revised Foundations/Form of Government in 2011. This revision was the result of thousands of conversations, historical and social research, and brave vision casting. The vision was to have a Form of Government (FoG) that allowed for the multiple contexts of congregations and presbyteries. Context as varied as the Presbyterians packed in Pennsylvania and the sparsely populated Wyoming. Context as varied as New York City and Salina, Kansas. The very different contexts exist in a presbytery with 35,000 members and a presbytery with 3,500 members. The former Form of Government created a structure that required uniformity. As the country and the church changed, that uniformity did not serve the mission of the church.

   A multiyear committee project led by the late former Moderator Cynthia Bolbach brought forth a revision that met this challenge. It separated the foundational material of what we are as Presbyterians from the governance material. There is now a Foundations of Presbyterian Polity section in the Constitution. This section spells out a clear articulation of who we are as Reformed people and how we are shaped as a church. It combines historical material with ecclesiastical prose.

   To help the larger church engage the new Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, a video series was created. The video series went through the Foundations line by line tying them with the appropriate Book of Confessions citation. This series was produced “in house” using our own staff and myself.

   The revisions to the Form of Government changed the answers to the questions the OGA receives about the Book of Order. In the past there was usually a specific answer for each specific question. Now that the FoG is more contextual, the conversation is more of a coaching session. To prepare for that most
of the staff of the OGA took basic coaching training. Staff has lead workshops on FoG across the
denomination.

2. Though it has been mentioned earlier, I would want to lift up the ecumenical achievements over
this time period. The mutual Recognition of Baptism with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and
the PC(USA) was a significant moment in our life catholic. The long-serving Presbyterian Episcopal
Dialogue produced an agreement to allow Presbyterians and Episcopalian ministers to preside at the
Lord’s Table in each other’s congregations. This was publically celebrated in 2012 with the Presiding
Bishop of the Episcopal Church and the Stated Clerk of the PC(USA) co-presiding at the table at the
220th General Assembly (2012) ecumenical service. The Southern Province of the Moravian Church in
America voted in 2010 to enter into a covenant relationship with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). With
the Northern Province of the church having taken a similar vote in 2010, the PC(USA) entered in
covenant relationship with all North American Moravians except those in Alaska, which is a separate
province.

The PC(USA) has been an active member of the major ecumenical conciliar bodies since their
inception. The World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the
National Council of Churches have all gone through major reorganizations. Often prompted by financial
challenges, these changes themselves have brought challenges. The PC(USA), through its many
representatives, continues to advocate for an ecumenical witness that is inclusive of all God’s children
and focused on bringing God’s justice to our troubled world.

3. One of the newer areas of focus that I celebrate is the support for ruling elders. In every corner of
the denomination I have met ruling elders who have had no or very little training. Most are being asked
to learn by osmosis. This office is crucial to our understanding of how we live our life as a community
of faith. We are creating training resources. I have lead ruling elder workshops across the church. Ruling
elders want to serve. There is a deep quest to be about something more than budgets, leaking roofs, and
the temperature in the sanctuary. Ruling elders want to be spiritually fed and to be equipped to
spiritually feed others. They do not want to see their time on the session as just another project. They
want meaning. This is a gift to the church and to each congregation.

4. The OGA’s main purpose is to bring people together to discern the mind of Christ. Numbers can
be mind-numbing. But numbers are people too. In the time period of this self-study, we have had four
General Assemblies with a total of more than 12,000 people in attendance. The approximately 3,000
commissioners have tackled more than 2,000 pieces of business. In addition, OGA has co-hosted three
Big Tents, eight Polity conferences, and trained almost 800 presbytery and synod moderators. Nine
permanent committees and several special committees bring Presbyterians from across the country to
pray, discuss, and make decisions of behalf of the whole church.

5. In order to more faithfully serve the changing church described in the first observation, OGA
engaged consultants to reorganize our staff focusing on collaboration and sharing across program
boundaries. The reorganization took into account current and future financial realities. The
reorganization reduced the staff by almost a third and the budget by a million dollars. We are still living
into the new staff structure. It is a hard transition but a necessary one. Because of the extraordinary
diligence of the OGA staff, we have been able to manage our costs and reserves wisely. In four of the
years since 2008 we have expenses coming under budget.

6. I must note the changes in the Book of Order that have marked this period. In May of 2011, G-
2.0104b was approved by the required majority of presbyteries. This replaced a previous section that
specifically prohibited persons who are not living in fidelity or chastity (specifically LGBTQ persons)
from serving in the ordained offices of the PC(USA). The new section made the decision as to who is
served for ordained office to the most local ordaining body. Currently (winter, spring 2015) presbyteries
are voting on a change in the Book of Order that would permit same gender marriage ceremonies in the
PC(USA).
Both of these changes have been received with joy by some in the church and with sadness by others. Somewhere between 300 and 400 congregations were dismissed by their presbyteries to other denominations. The Office of the General Assembly has developed resources for presbyteries and congregations to use for the dismissal conversations. These dismissals are unique to their local context with conditions for dismissal established by the presbytery. The 221st General Assembly (2014) approved a reconciliation project to work with presbyteries where there has been struggle and strife with these changes.

Conclusion: The Office of the General Assembly continues to encourage the PC(USA) to be a people of hope who come together to discern the mind of Christ. From that community discernment is a commitment to work for justice and mercy in the world and participate in God’s continual reformation of the church. As it says in the Book of Order, F-1.0404:

In Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all creation, the Church seeks a new openness to God’s mission in the world. In Christ, the triune God tends the least among us, suffers the curse of human sinfulness, raises up a new humanity, and promises a new future for all creation. In Christ, Church members share with all humanity the realities of creatureliness, sinfulness, brokenness, and suffering, as well as the future toward which God is drawing them. The mission of God pertains not only to the Church but also to people everywhere and to all creation.

For myself and my colleagues, we give thanks for the privilege of sharing in that ministry with the whole PC(USA).

Chapter VIII: Glossary

Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC): The Advisory Committee on the Constitution is a permanent committee of the General Assembly of the PC(USA). It is an elected body that advises the General Assembly on matters related to interpretation and amendment of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Advisory Committee on Litigation (ACL): The Advisory Committee on Litigation advises the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly regarding participation as a party, or an amicus, in litigation related to matters of civil and religious liberty, relations between church and state, and any other matters related to the mission and interest of the church.

Advisory Delegates: Persons who are active members in one of the constituent churches or governing bodies of the General Assembly (or, in the case of ecumenical advisory delegates, of a denomination of Christians designated by the General Assembly) who are selected to attend the meeting of the General Assembly in an advisory role so that the assembly may be assured of hearing and taking cognizance of their special viewpoints (Standing Rule B.2.a.). There are four categories of advisory delegates: young adult, theological student; overseas, and ecumenical (Standing Rule B.2.b.).

Big Tent: A national gathering of Presbyterians, held in alternate years as the General Assembly, designed to unite people for workshops, fellowship, and community building.

Commissioners: The General Assembly meeting “shall consist of equal numbers of ruling elders and teaching elders elected by the presbyteries ... to serve as commissioners” (Book of Order, G-3.0501).

Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA): The COLA is a committee composed of members of the host presbytery or presbyteries that organizes the onsite logistical and hospitality support in advance of the General Assembly, enlists volunteers to assist visitors attending the assembly, and sponsors special events during the assembly highlighting the local area, its churches, and its culture.

Committees/Commissions on Ministry (COM): The bodies charged by presbyteries to serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery; and to
settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery when possible and expedient. Presbyteries also may choose
to give these bodies another name, even though the tasks are the same.

Committee on the Office of the General Assembly: The Committee on the Office of the General
Assembly reports to each meeting of the General Assembly and assures the accountability of the Stated
Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly between sessions. The committee is responsible for
evaluating the work of the Stated Clerk; reviewing per capita budget requests submitted by the Stated
Clerk; approving proposed changes in the staffing design of the Office of the General Assembly;
consulting with the Stated Clerk on all proposed amendments to the Standing Rules of the General
Assembly; and providing linkage with the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Committees on Preparation for Ministry (CPM): The presbytery committee that works with inquirers
and candidates preparing for ministry.

General Assembly: The General Assembly is the highest governing body of the PC(USA). It consists
of commissioners (teaching elders and ruling elders) that are elected by presbyteries to vote on business
at the assembly. The assembly establishes policies, priorities, and budgets for the denomination and
elects persons to ongoing boards and committees that carry out the work of the denomination between
biennial meetings of the assembly.

General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relationships (GACEIR): The
committee gives a high profile to the vision of the ecumenical and interreligious involvement that is
central to the gospel and key to the life of the church. It also, among other things, plans and coordinates,
in consultation with the agencies and governing bodies of the church, the involvement of the PC(USA)
in ecumenical and interreligious relations and work.

General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR): The General Assembly Committee on
Representation is a permanent committee of the General Assembly. Sixteen persons serve, elected by the
assembly and drawn from ruling and teaching elders from across the country. The committee advises the
General Assembly and its subordinate bodies on representation, issues of concern including policies and
procedures that affect participation and matters related to the employment of personnel. In addition, it
advocates for diversity in leadership at the assembly level.

General Assembly Nominating Committee (GANC): The General Assembly Nominating Committee
proposes nominees to the General Assembly and ensures that careful consideration is given to the
nomination of equal numbers of ministers and church members.

General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC): The General Assembly Permanent
Judicial Commission is a permanent commission of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church
(U.S.A.) that exercises church discipline through judicial process.

National Council of Churches (NCC): Formally known as the National Council of the Churches of
Christ in the USA, the NCC is a leading force for ecumenical cooperation among Christians in the
United States. The thirty-seven NCC member communions—from a wide spectrum of Protestant,
Anglican, Orthodox, Evangelical, historic African American, and Living Peace churches—include 45
million persons in more than 100,000 local congregations.

Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA): The Presbyterian Mission Agency is the ministry and mission
agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Five ministry areas carry out its missional work:
Compassion, Peace and Justice; Evangelism and Church Growth; Racial Ethnic and Women’s
Ministries/Presbyterian Women; Theology, Worship and Education; and World Mission. The PMA also
includes Shared Services, Communications, and Funds Development ministry areas.

Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC): The Presbyterian Publishing Corporation is the
denominational publisher for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
Presbytery: Presbytery is a corporate expression of the church consisting of all the churches and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within a certain district. When a presbytery meets, each church shall be represented by an elder commissioned by the session with the additional provisions as listed in G-3.0301 of the Book of Order.

Ruling Elder Advisory Team: The Ruling Elder Advisory Team will serve as a resource to the Office of the General Assembly as it works to support the office of ruling elder and the congregations and mid councils in which ruling elders do ministry.

Self-Study: The self-study assists the agencies of the PC(USA) in examining their perceptions of their agency and its mission. It is the first step in the review process. This self-examination is the starting point of an ongoing and collaborative process where administration and staff work together to create and promote a system that is responsive to all facets of the agency.

Session: The session of a particular church consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, and the elders in active service. All members of the session, including the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors, are entitled to vote. The session is responsible for the mission and government of the particular church (Book of Order, G-3.0201).

Standing Rules: The rules under which the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) operates. These rules can be amended by each assembly, and are published in the Manual of the General Assembly.

Stated Clerk’s Polity Conference: The Stated Clerk’s Polity Conference provides the opportunity for mid council staff leaders to gather with OGA staff leaders to learn about polity issues, share common concerns, discuss the current state of the church, and discern our common life together.

Synod: A Presbyterian governing body ranking between the presbytery and the General Assembly.

World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC): It is the largest association of Reformed churches in the world. The WCRC consists of 229 churches (denominations) in 108 countries.

World Council of Churches (WCC): The WCC brings together more than 340 churches, denominations, and church fellowships in more than 100 countries and territories throughout the world, representing some 550 million Christians and including most of the world’s Orthodox churches, scores of denominations from such historic traditions of the Protestant Reformation as Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed, as well as many united and independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC’s founding churches were European and North American, today most are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

Chapter IX: Exhibits

1. Assembly-in-Brief (GA221–2014)
5. OGA Core Competencies
6. OGA Consultants Report
The Assembly of Yes … mostly

The 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (GA221) will most likely go down in history as one that said “yes” on a number of controversial issues that have been before various Assemblies without resolution.

GA221 took purposeful action on the questions of same-gender marriage, divestment from companies pursuing non-peaceful business practices in Israel-Palestine, including the Confession of Belhar in the Book of Confessions, and reorganizing and revitalizing synods.

The 654 commissioners spent a great deal of time crafting messages and means for interpreting their actions, emphasizing the importance of individual conscience in Presbyterian polity, and devising plans for church leaders to visit all 171 presbyteries to seek as much reconciliation as is possible in a deeply divided church.

And they chose a leader with conciliatory style and a ready smile.

Ruling Elder Heath Rada of Western North Carolina Presbytery was elected Moderator of the Assembly on the first ballot. Rada, who is retired and living in Montreat, N.C., is a former president of the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Va., and former chief executive officer of the Richmond branch of the American Red Cross. A skilled mediator, Rada told the Assembly: “We need to find ways for people to live together and disagree. A mediator can help find significant common ground.”

Rada’s Vice-Moderator is the Reverend Larissa Kwong Abazia, a Chinese-American pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Forest Hills, a multicultural, multiethnic congregation in Queens, N.Y. She echoed Rada’s-and the Assembly’s-call for reconciliation. “If we can share our stories so we can learn and build relationships, we won’t feel so isolated or disconnected from the larger church,” she said.
‘Yes’ to divestment from three U.S. companies

Commissioners voted 310-303 (51%-49%) to divest from three companies whose business practices the Assembly determined are contributing to non-peaceful pursuits in Israel-Palestine. The companies are Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Motorola Solutions.

A similar measure was defeated by the 2012 Assembly 333-331. The Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee has been attempting corporate engagement with the three companies, without success, since an action by the 2004 General Assembly.

The Assembly emphasized that the vote was not a vote to divest from Israel and did not represent in any way endorsement of the more controversial BDS (boycott, divestment, sanctions) Movement and in a preamble added to the divestment action said:

“The PC(USA) has a long-standing commitment to peace in Israel-Palestine. We recognize the complexity of the issues, the decades-long struggle, and the pain suffered and inflicted by policies and practices of both the Israeli government and Palestinian entities. We further acknowledge and confess our own complicity in both the historic and current suffering of Israelis and Palestinians (yearning for justice and reconciliation).”

‘Yes’ to same-gender marriage: pastoral discretion and a new definition

By a vote of 371-238 (61%-39%), the Assembly approved an “authoritative interpretation” of section W-4.9000 of the Book of Order to grant pastors discretion in determining whether or not to conduct same-gender marriages in civil jurisdictions where such marriages are legal. The ruling, which currently applies to 19 states and the District of Columbia, effectively removes a ban on Presbyterian pastors conducting marriages for same-gender couples in those jurisdictions that was imposed by an authoritative interpretation issued by the 1991 General Assembly. The authoritative interpretation takes effect immediately.

The Assembly also proposed an amendment to W-4.9001 that would change the constitutional definition of marriage from “between a man and a woman” to “two people, traditionally between a man and a woman.” The vote on the proposed amendment—which goes to the denomination’s 171 presbyteries for ratification during the next year—was 429-175 (71%-29%). (cont’d on p.3)

The Bottom Line

Actions taken during the Assembly added $295,119 to the General Assembly mission budget for 2015 and $68,418 for the 2016 budget. Therefore, the Assembly approved revised mission budgets for the two years of $73,671,744 and $78,226,389 respectively. The 2016 budget is higher because in that year the next Presbyterian Youth Triennium will be held, drawing thousands of Presbyterian young people to the campus of Purdue University in Indiana.

Similarly, other Assembly actions added $14,800 to the 2014 per capita budget, $124,945 to the 2015 budget, and $61,165 for 2016. As a result, the Assembly voted to increase the per capita apportionment by five cents each of the next two years—to $7.07 per member in 2015 and to $7.12 in 2016.
‘Study’ to fossil fuel divestment

The Assembly voted 469-110 (81%-19%) to refer an overture that would have called for divestment from all fossil fuel companies within five years. The Assembly instead referred the measure to the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee, which has engaged companies over their corporate behavior on behalf of the PC(USA) for 30 years. Under the MRTI rubric, divestment has historically been the action of last resort after other corporate engagement efforts have failed.

Peacemaking Offering expanded

By a hand vote, the Assembly voted to retool the annual Peacemaking Offering after 2016 to include global witness. Since its inception 20 years ago, the Peacemaking Offering has been designated for the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.

By including world mission efforts in the retooled offering—which will be called the Peace and Global Witness Offering—the PC(USA)'s Special Offerings Task Force hopes to make greater progress toward the church's goal of roughly doubling receipts from the four special offerings—Peacemaking, Christmas Joy, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Pentecost-to $20 million by the year 2020.

And the Assembly celebrated the continuing success of the "1001 New Worshipping Communities" initiative. More than 240 such communities have registered since the initiative was launched at the 2012 General Assembly. Presbyteries were encouraged to propel the movement by conducting educational and training events and every presbytery was asked to start at least one new worshipping community during the next two years.

‘Educate a Child, Transform the World’

Presbyterians were called on by the Assembly to provide quality education to 1 million children in the U.S. and around the world in the next four years as a way to alleviate poverty, especially for women and children.

The initiative, co-sponsored by World Mission and Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, has already attracted support. The Reverend Tim Hart-Andersen, pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis, announced his church, along with Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago and Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, had pledged $1.65 million to the Educate a Child initiative’s effort in South Sudan.

The Assembly approved a second Presbyterian Mission Agency initiative, "Living Missionally," which encourages PC(USA) congregations to engage in mission activities beyond their walls.

The Assembly was careful to protect the consciences of pastors on both sides of the issue, including protective language in both measures. A clause in the proposed amendment states:

"Nothing herein shall compel a teaching elder to perform nor compel a session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the teaching elder or the session believes is contrary to the teaching elder's or the session's discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God."

‘Yes’ to the Belhar Confession

The Assembly voted 551-87 (86%-14%) to send the Confession of Belhar—which has its roots in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s—to the 171 presbyteries for their votes to include it the PC(USA)'s Book of Confessions.

The confession—which addresses justice, reconciliation, and unity—must now be approved by two-thirds of the presbyteries and then by the 2016 General Assembly for it to become part of the denomination's doctrinal statements. The 2010 Assembly approved Belhar S25-150, but it failed to gain approval by the presbyteries, falling eight votes short (108-63) of the required super-majority.

‘Yes’ to new synod boundaries

The Assembly voted 449-128 (78%-22%) to reduce the number of PC(USA) synods from 16 to between 10 and 12, including the Sinodo Boríquen in Puerto Rico. It will be up to synods and the presbyteries that comprise them to decide where the new boundaries are drawn and which services each synod will provide.

The recommendation is based on a report from the second of two Mid Councils Commissions that have been addressing the role and function of synods and presbyteries to a lesser extent since 2010. The 2012 General Assembly, responding to the first of the commissions, rejected a proposal that synods be eliminated as ecclesiastical units of the PC(USA). The second commission recommended that synods be reduced “to no more than eight.”

Synods and their presbyteries were directed to reconfigure synod boundaries “based on an emerging sense of purpose, partnership, context, and call.” The Assembly concluded:

"...Synods continue to have a vital role within our life as a denomination. However, the time has come for fewer synods within a structure of mutual accountability that encourages each synod to discern God's call to find its unique role in affirming the creativity that already resides in our mid council system."
Assembly agencies

...
G220th GA by the numbers

1: candidates for stated clerk: Gradye Parsons—a first since reunion
4: candidates for moderator and number of ballots it took to elect
6.87: ($) General Assembly per capita appropriation for 2013
7.02: ($) Per capita appropriation for 2014
8: Missionary Advisory Delegates
9: colors of badges denoting various Assembly participants
12: apostles
15: Ecumenical Advisory Delegates
21: Assembly committees
22: ecumenical representatives
24: Theological Student Advisory Delegates
45: anniversary of the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba
47: ($) daily meal allowance
50: anniversary of the National Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Guatemala
52: translation errors corrected in the new edition of the Heidelberg Catechism
100: anniversary of Presbyterian mission in Korea; corresponding members
112: overtures submitted by presbyteries and synods
115: Office of the General Assembly staff and volunteers
160: Young Adult Advisory Delegates
265: staff and stated clerks from presbyteries and synods
280: Presbyterian military chaplains serving under denominational endorsement
300: (approximately) Authoritative Interpretations issued since 1983
500: staff, elected members, consultants, guests
688: commissioners to the 220th General Assembly
800: (approximately) items of business
849: hymns and songs in Glory to God, the new Presbyterian hymnal, and published by the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation

Contemplative Caution

In an interview with Presbyterian News Service just prior to the 220th General Assembly, outgoing moderator Cindy Bolbach urged caution, saying, “I’m not sure we can absorb anything that’s another huge change.” She was referring to the new Form of Government and the new standard for ordination which were both approved by the 219th General Assembly and ratified by the presbyteries a year ago.

A deeply divided Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was facing numerous more controversial issues June 30-July 7 in Pittsburgh, but the 688 commissioners and more than 200 advisory delegates that comprised the 220th General Assembly seemed determined to follow Bolbach’s advice. Repeatedly throughout the week, they prayed, worshiped, discussed and debated such volatile questions as whether to:

• change the PC(USA)’s definition of marriage;
• divest from three companies benefitting from “non-peaceful pursuits” in Israel-Palestine;
• eliminate synods and allow creation of non-geographic presbyteries;
• overhaul the denomination’s four special offerings;
• revise ordination standards for church officers;
• lift a boycott of Arizona because of that state’s immigration law.

In each case and many others among the more than 800 items of business, these commissioners and advisory delegates deliberated carefully and at length—Friday evening’s session, for instance, did not conclude until 1:30 a.m.—and at the end of the day opted for actions that seemed least likely to plunge the PC(USA) into further turmoil.

They were steered adroitly through their work by the Rev. Neal D. Presa of Elizabeth Presbytery, who was elected moderator Saturday evening on the fourth ballot over three other candidates—the Rev. Sue Krummel of Great Rivers Presbytery, the Rev. Robert Austell Jr. of Charlotte Presbytery and the Rev. Randy Branson of Palo Duro Presbytery—and by General Assembly Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons, who on Sunday was re-elected to a second four-year term without opposition.
Middle East peace

After heated but civil debate Thursday evening, the Assembly—by a razor-thin margin—said no to divestment as part of its position on peace in the Middle East. The Assembly Committee on Middle East Peacemaking Issues had proposed that the PC(USA) divest from three companies that the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) says are profiting from non-peaceful business pursuits in Israel and Palestine—Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions and Hewlett-Packard. Instead, by a vote of 333-331 the Assembly adopted a minority report that calls for the church to “pursue a positive and creative course of action” in Israel-Palestine, including “a plan of active investment in projects that will support collaboration among Christians, Jews and Muslims and help in the development of a viable infrastructure for a future Palestinian state.” Also, the Assembly rejected by a vote of 463-175 an overture that would have branded Israeli law and practices “apartheid” against Palestinian people. And the Assembly called for a boycott of “all products made by enterprises in Israeli settlements on [occupied] Palestinian land.”

By a vote of 531-127, the Assembly voted to support a diplomatic solution to tensions between the United States and Iran over that country's nuclear program. The action calls for direct unconditional negotiations between the two countries and opposes “preemptive military action by any nation against Iran and by Iran against any nation.” The Assembly also voted 621-19 to “stand with the Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, our partner church, and other churches who are facing unprecedented challenges now and are attempting to respond through new forms of witness.” The action supports “full public congressional debate” of any potential U.S. military intervention in Syria and careful examination of the humanitarian impact of any intervention.

Leaders

In addition to the election of Presa as moderator and the reelection of Parsons as stated clerk, the Assembly confirmed the re-elections of the Rev. Jay Hudson as president and CEO of the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program and of Marc Lewis as president and publisher of the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation. The Assembly also confirmed the election of two seminary presidents: the Rev. Frank Yamada at McCormick Theological Seminary and the Rev. Jim McDonald at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

The Assembly was stunned Wednesday morning when its vice moderator, the Rev. Tara Spuhler McCabe, resigned. McCabe, a member of National Capital Presbytery, cited controversy surrounding her recent signing of a marriage license for two lesbian women in Washington, D.C. Same-gender marriage is legal in the nation’s capital. The Assembly had confirmed her appointment Sunday by a vote of 55-44%. Later Wednesday, the Assembly confirmed Presa’s choice of the Rev. Tom Trinidad of Pueblo Presbytery to replace McCabe as vice moderator.
Awards


Peacemaker Awards (Presbyterian Peace Fellowship): the Rev. Victor Makari, former area coordinator for the Middle East; and the Rev. Alice Winters, who served as a PC(USA) missionary in Colombia for more than 30 years.

Excellence in Theological Education Award (Committee on Theological Education): the Rev. John B. Trotti, librarian at Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Va., for 34 years.

Bell-McKay Prize (Presbyterians for Renewal): the late Joyce McMillan, missionary to Taiwan for 47 years.

Lydia Fund Scholarship (Presbyterian for Renewal): Kris Johnson, a student at Gordon-Conwell Seminary; and Kari Olsen, a student at Princeton Theological Seminary.

David Steele Distinguished Writer Award (Presbyterian Writers Guild): the Rev. John Buchanan, editor of The Christian Century and retired pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago.


C. Fred Jenkins Constitutional Services Award (Association of Stated Clerks): Ruling Elder Alyson Janke.

E. T. Thompson Award (Presbyterian Outlook): the Rev. Laura Mendenhall, pastor, former president of Columbia Theological Seminary and senior advisor to the Texas Presbyterian Foundation.

Same-gender marriage

After several hours of debate on Friday, the Assembly defeated a motion from its Assembly Committee on Civil Union and Marriage Issues to propose an amendment to the Book of Order that would change the definition of marriage from “a man and a woman” to “two people.” The vote was 308-338. Along the way the Assembly declined to issue an authoritative interpretation that would have allowed ministers at their own discretion to perform same-gender marriages in states where those marriages are legal.

And by a vote of 489-152, the Assembly “in a desire to promote the peace, unity and purity of the church” voted to “move the whole Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) into a season of serious study and discernment concerning its meaning of Christian marriage” between now and the General Assembly in 2014. The Office of Theology and Worship was asked to prepare educational materials for the effort that include “the relevant Scriptures, key methods of biblical interpretation, current understandings of our Constitution, and some suggested guidance for prayerful and reconnecting ways of listening to one another.”
Ordination standards

By a vote of 437-169, the Assembly refused to restore “fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness” to the Book of Order. That language was removed a year ago in voting by the presbyteries. The defeated language would have added to G-2.0104b “the commitment to live a chaste and disciplined life, whether in holy marriage between a man and a woman or in single life.”

By a vote of 329-275 the Assembly voted to propose an amendment to the ordination standard in G-2.0104a that the manner of life of church officers should “include repentance of sin and diligent use of the means of grace.”

The Assembly also adopted a statement that “acknowledges that faithful Presbyterians earnestly seeking to follow Jesus Christ hold different views about what the Scriptures teach concerning the morality of committed, same-gender relationships” and that “the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does not have one interpretation of Scripture in this matter.”

Special offerings

By a vote of 395-147, the Assembly voted to retain the PC(USA)’s four special offerings in their current form. The Assembly’s Special Offerings Advisory Task Force had recommended wholesale changes in the offerings—the Pentecost Offering, the Peacemaking Offering, the Christmas Joy Offering and the One Great Hour of Sharing offering—designed to reverse the decline in offering receipts over the last 10 years. The task force had also proposed that the distribution of the offerings be redirected from specific programs to more general causes to be determined by the General Assembly Mission Council.

Other proposed changes by the task force included eliminating the Peacemaking Offering and replacing it with an offering to benefit world mission, while moving peacemaking ministries to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. The One Great Hour currently funds Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program and the Self-Development of People program. A proposal from the Assembly Committee on Mission Coordination suggesting a combined peacemaking and world mission offering was also rejected.

The Assembly approved the renaming of the General Assembly Mission Council to the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The name change was triggered by the new Form of Government, which replaces the term “governing body” with “council.” The GAMC (now Presbyterian Mission Agency) is an entity of the General Assembly, not a governing body (now council).

Worship

Preachers at the 220th General Assembly were asked to preach from Mark 2:1-12. What some of them had to say:

“No walls or crowds were able to deny the paralyzed man entrance to the building and access to Jesus. His friends gave him a new mode of access and Jesus blessed these efforts, much to the chagrin of the murmuring scribes.”—Ruling Elder Tony De La Rosa, interim executive, New York City Presbytery

“Jesus Christ directly linked himself to the coming of justice, righteousness and peace. For us to do any less is to live a partial and incomplete gospel.”—the Rev. Jerry Pillay of South Africa, president of the World Communion of Reformed Churches

“Jesus isn’t concerned with who the heavy lifters are. Jesus is concerned with what these heavy lifters do.”—the Rev. Margaret Aymer, associate professor of New Testament and biblical hermeneutics, Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta.

“At the heart of the gospel, at the heart of each community of faith that seeks to proclaim the gospel, is not structure or the Form of Government. At the heart of the gospel lie disciples like these in Mark who are willing to take risks, willing to do whatever it takes to help others see Jesus. Not just carry those whom they like, but maybe even carrying those they don’t know, those they don’t like. Willing to go up to the roof, willing to cut a hole in it.”—Cindy Bolbach, moderator of the 219th General Assembly
**Immigration**

The Assembly declined to lift a prohibition on holding national church meetings in Arizona. The ban was put in place by the Assembly in 2010 after the Arizona legislature passed an immigration law the church said would jeopardize the rights and safety of Presbyterians of color. Three-fourths of the law was recently thrown out by the U.S. Supreme Court, but the Assembly considered what remains of the legislation still a threat to people of color.

On recommendation of its Assembly Committee on Immigration Issues, the Assembly also renewed its call for comprehensive immigration reform and called on all Presbyterians to “take actions concerning the place and plight of immigrant people, regardless of status.”

**Peacemaking**

Given the lateness of the hour on Friday night, the Assembly adopted all the recommendations of its Assembly Committee on Peacemaking and International Issues by consent. They included:

- affirming the PC(USA)’s “historic commitment to the United Nations”;
- re-affirming “the important role of Congolese women and children” in that country’s peace-building and reconciliation efforts;
- advocating for human rights and democratization in the countries affected by the “Arab Spring” by adopting a statement from the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy;
- approving ACSWP’s biennial “Human Rights Update” and directing that the next report include the subjects of “forced abortions, gender and disability selection-based abortions, and infanticide.”

Speakers: Bishop Reuel Marigza, General Secretary of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines; noted historian of the Presbyterian mission in Egypt, Heather J. Sharkey; Rear Admiral Mark Tidd.

**Governance**

Thursday morning, the Assembly by a vote of 480-169 rejected a proposal from its General Assembly Commission on Mid Councils Issues that would allow the creation of non-geographic presbyteries “for particular missional purposes.” The Assembly added a comment “that the congregations be encouraged to engage in collaborative missional endeavors, irrespective of their locations within particular presbytery geographic boundaries.”

The Assembly referred another recommendation regarding the future of synods. The Commission on Mid Councils had recommended that synods be eliminated as ecclesiastical units of the PC(USA) and “repurposed” for mission activities determined by their member presbyteries. The Assembly Committee on Mid Councils Issues sought a task force composed of two representatives from each synod to redraw synod boundaries in ways that will make them more effective. Instead the Assembly voted 364-293 to refer the matter of synods to a task force that is charged to further discuss, refine and bring to the next Assembly recommendations that consider the composition and organization of synods and presbyteries in support of missional congregations.

Thursday afternoon, the Assembly affirmed by voice vote its Assembly Committee on Church Polity’s recommendation that the PC(USA) ’s property clause—that holds that all church property is held in trust for the denomination—be upheld. Two presbyteries had submitted overtures that would have declared that sessions own the property of PC(USA) congregations. The Assembly also approved the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s 2013-2016 “Mission Work Plan.”

An Assembly-goer walks the labyrinth at the 220th GA. Photo by Michael Whitman

Worshippers use a sampler edition of “Glory to God,” the new Presbyterian hymnal that will be published in 2013. Photos by Danny Bolin
**Doctrinal statements**

On a voice vote, the Assembly sent to the presbyteries for their votes a new translation of the 1563 Heidelberg Catechism. The new translation from the original German-language version corrects numerous errors in translation from the original, expunges later additions to the catechism that were not in the 1563 original and restores scriptural citations that were included in the original but have never been included in PC(USA) translations.

Also on recommendation of its Assembly Committee on Confessions of the Church, the Assembly voted 395-264 to initiate the study process that could lead to the inclusion of the Belhar Confession in the PC(USA)’s *The Book of Confessions*. The Assembly in 2010 took the same action, but Belhar fell eight votes short of the required two-thirds affirmative vote by the presbyteries. The Assembly action included funds for education across the church about the confession, which was developed by South African theologians in the 1980s as their response to the sin of racism and the practice of apartheid in that country.

**Social justice**

Thursday afternoon the Assembly passed a list of 23 proposals from its Assembly Committee on Social Justice Issues. They included:

- support of the Environmental Protection Agency; support for a “50 Year Farm Bill” that seeks long-term goals of renewability and sustainability, environmentally sound farming practices, participatory research and decision-making and revitalized rural communities and food economies;
- several proposals on economic justice, including the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy’s report, “World of Hurt, Word of Life: Renewing God’s Communion in the Work of Economic Reconstruction”;
- advocacy efforts for victims of sexual assault;
- a statement on affordable housing and the mortgage crisis;
- a call for trade reform; and
- an investigation of the corporate practices of for-profit prisons.

In its closest social justice issues vote, the Assembly voted 334-306 to call for an end to corporal punishment in homes, schools, pediatric facilities, hospitals, orphanages, clinics, state institutions and childcare facilities.

**Church growth and evangelism**

On Friday night, the Assembly declared “a churchwide commitment to ignite a movement that results in the creation of 1001 new worshiping communities in the next 10 years.” Pittsburgh is a hotbed for the creation of experimental new churches and several of them were visited by Assembly-goers on July 1, when Sunday worship was held in local churches rather than the convention center.

The Assembly approved the report of its Special Committee on the Nature of the Church in the 21st Century. The report’s plethora of recommendations include finding new ways to start new churches and revitalize existing churches, to affirm bi-vocational ministry, encouraging seminaries to offer courses that help prepare students for emerging cultural realities, urging presbyteries to develop better strategies for reaching immigrant communities, expanding distribution of resources in multiple languages, revamping the church’s compensation system, reaffirming the parity of ministry between teaching elders and ruling elders, training church leaders about white privilege and how it diminishes the church’s witness, developing better resources to help councils of the church move into the future, and mobilizing the church’s public witness.

And the Assembly asked the Presbyterian Mission Agency to provide “basic accessibility of essential GAMC information to major non-English language groups, specifically Korean and Spanish.”
With an unusually large number of contentious issues on the agenda, the 219th General Assembly (2010)—with the theme “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38)—could have been a stormy crossing. That it wasn’t is a tribute to the spirit of civility and unity that predominated among the 712 commissioners and 200 advisory delegates who diligently adhered to their commissions “to discern the mind of Christ.”

They were also well-served by two calm and competent leaders—Moderator Cynthia Bolbach and Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons. While no Assembly produces consensus on many issues, the 219th General Assembly demonstrated Presbyterian governance at its best—elders, ministers and advisers worshiping, laughing, praying, singing, studying, debating and navigating potentially treacherous waters together to seek the best way forward for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Bolbach, an elder from National Capital Presbytery, was elected moderator opening night (July 3) on the fourth ballot. She was the only elder in the field of six candidates. Bolbach employed brief answers and a winsome sense of humor to steadily gain ground, rising from 149 votes (30%) of the votes on the first ballot to 325 votes (53%) on the decisive fourth ballot. None of the other five candidates—the Rev. Julia Leeth of Santa Barbara Presbytery, the Rev. James Belle of Philadelphia Presbytery, the Rev. Maggie Lauterer of Western North Carolina Presbytery, the Rev. Eric Nielsen of Northern Waters Presbytery, and the Rev. Jin S. Kim of host Twin Cities Area Presbytery—exceeded 23% of the vote on any ballot.

Bolbach’s running mate for vice-moderator, the Rev. Landon Whitsitt, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Liberty, MO (Heartland Presbytery) was installed later in the week.
Middle East peace

The Assembly voted 558–119 (82%–17%) to approve “Breaking Down the Walls,” the report from the Assembly’s Middle East Study Committee. The amended report, which was hotly debated in the days leading up to the Assembly, affirms Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders and commends for study “A Moment of Truth”—a statement by Palestinian Christian leaders that emphasizes hope for liberation, nonviolence, love of enemy and reconciliation. It also calls for the Israeli and Egyptian governments to limit their blockade of Gaza solely to military equipment and authorizes a seven-member Monitoring Group on the Middle East to assist with implementation of the church’s policy in the region. The Assembly deleted two historical analysis sections—by Palestinian Christians and a “Liberal Zionist”—from the 172-page report and ordered their replacement with “a series of eight narratives” arising from the range of “authentically” Palestinian Christian, Muslim and Israeli perspectives.

The Assembly voted 529–135 to refer a theological paper on the relationship between Christians and Jews back to the offices of Interfaith Relations and Theology and Worship for revision. Opponents of the paper—“Christians and Jews: People of God”—argued that the paper is flawed because Palestinian Christians were not included in its development. A paper on Christian-Muslim relations that calls for greater dialogue, understanding and cooperation between Christians and Muslims was adopted 548–29.

The auditorium was filled with joyful noise during the opening worship on Sunday morning.

Minister Commissioner Calvin Gittner using his iPhone during the Church and Social Media gathering on Wednesday.

Elder Cynthia (Cindy) Bolbach, Moderator of the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at the Moderator’s Reception.

Ally Poole, a Young Adult Advisory Delegate, leads the plenary session in an energizer.

YAAD Beatrix Weil asks a question from the plenary floor.

The Rev. Karen Dimon was moderator of the Assembly Committee on Middle East Peacemaking Issues.
Community Transformation Award (Presbyterian Association for Community Transformation): Rebuilding Hope in New Orleans (RHINO), a ministry of St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Breaking the Silence Award (Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network): LACASA, a domestic violence ministry related to First Presbyterian Church, Brighton, MI.

Faith in Action Award (Presbyterian AIDS Network): Red Ribbon Fellowship, a ministry of First Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth, NJ.

John R. Thomas Award (Presbyterian Association of Specialized Pastoral Ministries): San Francisco Theological Seminary, home to the Shaw Family Chair for Clinical Pastoral Education, the only endowed CPE chair in the world.

Whole Gospel Congregation Award (Presbyterian Voices for Justice): Kwanzaa Community Church in Minneapolis, for its commitment to justice in church and society.

Ordination standards

The Assembly voted 373–323 (53%–46%) to delete the current G-6.0106b from the Book of Order that requires “fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness,” and replace it with language reading: “Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life. The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation 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. Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.”

The 2008 Assembly sent a similar measure to the 173 presbyteries. It was narrowly defeated. This will be the fourth time proposed amendments to G-6.0106b have been submitted to the presbyteries since the provision was placed in the PC(USA)’s Book of Order following the 208th General Assembly (1996).

Nancy Jennings Award (Presbyterians for Disability Concerns): The Rev. David E. Young, for his work with The Arc of Midland, which promotes the welfare of and participation in church and society by persons with developmental disabilities in Midland, MI. C. Lynn Cox, from Presbyterians for Disability Concerns, presented the award.
Civil unions and Christian marriage

The Assembly voted to maintain the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s current definition of marriage as “between a man and a woman.” In voting 439–208 to approve the report of its Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage, the Assembly turned back several overtures seeking to change the constitutional definition of marriage in the Directory for Worship to “two people.”

The report calls for further discussion of issues around the church’s understanding of marriage and same-sex unions and the development of resources that will help guide presbyteries, sessions and ministers, particularly in states that have legalized gay marriage. The Assembly also voted to send to the churches a minority report that defends what its supporters call a more “traditionalist” stance against any sexual relations outside heterosexual marriage.

The Assembly voted 366–287 to urge the Board of Pensions to extend the same spousal and dependent benefits to same-gender domestic partners as it does to married plan members. It also approved an increase in BOP pension dues of up to 1 percent, effective Jan. 1, 2012, to cover the cost of the additional benefits. To address concerns that the added benefit would create a moral dilemma for some church employers, the resolution includes a provision urging the BOP to create a “relief of conscience” fund to segregate dues of employers who are conscientiously opposed to same-gender benefits. The Board has a similar provision for employers who object to their dues being used to pay for abortion procedures.

Peace-Seeker Award (Presbyterian Peace Fellowship): Bill Galvin and Mel Duncan (pictured together at right).

William Gibson Award (Presbyterians for Earth Care): The Rev. Robert L. Stivers of Tacoma, WA, a pioneer in Christian environmental ethics; and the Rev. Kristina Peterson, pastor of Bayou Blue First Presbyterian Church in Gray, LA.

Outstanding More Light Church (More Light Presbyterians): St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Wayzata, MN.


Ernest Trice Thompson Award (Presbyterian Outlook Foundation): The Rev. Syngman Rhee, a native of North Korea, who has worked tirelessly for ecumenical understanding, Presbyterian world mission and the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea.

Restoring Creation Award (Presbyterians for Earth Care): North Como Presbyterian Church, Roseville, MN.

David Hancock Award (Presbyterians for Addiction Action): Susan Koll, chairwoman of Faith Partners in St. Paul, MN, a network of more than 300 faith groups addressing addiction prevention and treatment around the country. The Rev. Nancy K. Troy, above left, presented the award at the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA) luncheon.
**Awards**

**Women of Faith Awards:** Elder Joyce Uyeda, Parkview Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, CA, and moderator of Ethnic Concerns Consultation; the Rev. Elizabeth Knott, retired executive of the Synod of Alaska-Northwest and founder of Pal Crafaid, which helps Palestinians find markets for their olive wood and needlework crafts; Elder Elona Street-Stewart, associate executive for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and a leading advocate for racial justice, peace and equal opportunity; and the Rev. Margaret Howland, the 12th woman ordained to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church and pastor emeritus of South Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, NY.

**David Steele Distinguished Writer Award (Presbyterian Writers Guild):** The Rev. Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message* version of the Bible and other works

**Lifetime Achievement Award (Presbyterian Writers Guild):** Presbyterian poet Ann Weems.

**Jim Angell Award (Presbyterian Writers Guild):** Rebecca Barnes-Davies for her book, *50 Ways to Help Save the Earth: How You and Your Church Can Help Make a Difference*, chosen 2009’s best first book by a Presbyterian writer

**Excellence in Theological Education Award (Committee on Theological Education):** Elder Barbara Wheeler, recently retired president of Auburn Theological Seminary and founder of the Center for the Study of Theological Education

**God and Service Award (National Association of Presbyterian Scouters):** Dave Moore, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis.

**Governance**

The Assembly voted 468–204 to approve a massive revision of the Form of Government that has been worked and reworked over the last four years. The Form of Government has been amended more than 300 times since it was adopted in 1983 at Presbyterian reunion. The revisions are intended to make it less regulatory and more missional. Assembly Committee on Form of Government Revision moderator Tim Beal of Baltimore Presbytery said the new Form of Government is “clear about standards but allows flexibility for councils (governing bodies) to best determine how to express those standards.” The revision now goes to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes.

The Assembly voted 566–104 to create a 21-member middle governing body commission with authority to act on the Assembly’s behalf in responding to realignment requests from synods and presbyteries. In response to concerns that the commission might be able to act unilaterally to change synod and presbytery structures, the Assembly adopted an amendment that makes explicit that the commission can only act “upon a majority affirmative vote of the affected presbytery or presbyteries or a majority affirmative vote of the presbyteries in the affected synod or synods.” The Assembly’s action also requires that all decisions of the commission be approved by a two-thirds majority.

Also assigned to the new commission is supervision of the work of the Assembly’s Special Committee on Administrative Review of the Synod of Boriquen in Puerto Rico and Its Constituent Presbyteries. The special committee, appointed by the 2008 Assembly, reported that the synod “is rife with power struggles among individuals, groups, and the middle governing bodies of the synod... that undermine the ability of the church in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to focus on Christ’s Great Commission.”

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Debby Applegate was on hand to sign her books sold at the Cokesbury booth in the GA Exhibit Hall on Tuesday afternoon. She was the guest speaker earlier in the day for the Presbyterian Historical Society’s Luncheon.
**Doctrinal statements**

By a voice vote, the Assembly voted to continue work on correcting “incomplete and insufficient” translation of the Heidelberg Catechism from the original German into English in cooperation with the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America. Those denominations are working on similar corrective translations of five questions in the catechism.

The Assembly voted 525–150 to send the Belhar Confession to the presbyteries for their votes to include it as the 12th doctrinal statement in the denomination’s Book of Confessions. The Belhar Confession was developed in the mid-1980s by the South African churches as their theological response to the racism of apartheid. The confession is valuable, proponents say, because it seeks to address issues of racial justice and reconciliation that are still relevant today.

**Leaders**

The Assembly confirmed the General Assembly Mission Council’s election of elder Linda Valentine to a second four-year term as executive director of the General Assembly Mission Council; the Rev. Tom Taylor as president of the Presbyterian Foundation; the Rev. Stephen A. Hayner as president of Columbia Theological Seminary; the Rev. Michael Jinkins as president of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; and the Rev. Paul T. Roberts as president and dean of Johnson C. Smith Seminary in Atlanta.

Linda Valentine, Executive Director of the General Assembly Mission Council

“Having just crossed the Red Sea, the Israelites must have wondered, ‘What has God planned?’ Then Miriam stands up with a tambourine in hand and begins to sing. Her song reminds the people of their God, who delivered them from slavery. It creates a path into that unknown wilderness ahead.”

—2010 seminary graduate Taylor Lewis Guthrie

“Storms are scariest in the middle. Often in the middle is when that question ‘Where is your faith?’ is asked. It’s in the middle when we are not where we used to be and don’t know where we’re going that it’s really very scary. Jesus’ words? ‘Get in the boat, go across the lake, there will be a storm, you will not die.’”

—General Assembly Stated Clerk the Rev. Gradye Parsons
"All water comes from the same source: God. The church now is made up of small bodies of water separated by theological beliefs. If we are able to become one body of water, we will be able to nourish the world. If that water is contaminated by dividing agendas and judgments, then we are not able to give life to the world."

—The Rev. Ruth-Aimee Belonni-Rosario, associate director of admissions at Princeton Theological Seminary

"Imagine how many souls could be won if we praised God both in season and out. Imagine if our demeanor matched our doctrine. Imagine bringing the whole world to the living water poured out for them."

—College student Hakeem Jerome Jefferson of Goodwill Presbyterian Church, Mayesville, SC

The Assembly voted to renew for two more years a denomination-wide church growth emphasis titled “Grow Christ’s Church Deep and Wide.” The emphasis was first adopted by the 2008 General Assembly and encourages congregations to grow in four areas: evangelism, discipleship, servanthood and diversity.

The Assembly honored eight retiring overseas missionaries who have served the PC(USA) for more than 20 years: the Revs. Dan and Carol Chou Adams, 36 years in Taiwan and the Republic of Korea; Scott Smith (32 years) and Melanie Smith (30 years) in Bangladesh, Nepal and India; Virginia Gartrell, 28 years in Brazil; the Rev. Thomas and Carol Hastings, 20 years in Japan; and Kathryn Hoffman, 20 years in India.

The World Mission Commissioning Service included recognition of PC(USA) mission co-workers who have 20 or more years of mission service.

Minister Commissioner Beth Braxton and Festus Gitonga, an Ecumenical Representative from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, have a heartfelt conversation during the Simple Meal on Monday.
Social justice

The Assembly voted 420–205 to "refrain from holding national meetings in states where travel by immigrant Presbyterians or Presbyterians of color might subject them to harassment or racial profiling." The action came in light of a recently enacted Arizona law that many feel unfairly targets Hispanic Americans.

The Assembly also approved recommendations calling for:
- An immediate moratorium on all executions in the United States;
- Establishing a theological wetlands education center in the Presbytery of South Louisiana;
- The church at every level to become informed and active in preventing gun violence;
- Increased attention to human rights, particularly in the areas of human trafficking, detention of immigrants and the continuing problem of torture;
- The PC(USA) to become "an HIV and AIDS competent church," including encouraging all Presbyterians, especially ministers, to be tested to help eliminate the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS testing;
- Reaffirmation of the PC(USA)’s longstanding commitment to public education and equal educational opportunity for all children;
- Renewed efforts to combat violence against women and children along the U.S.-Mexico border;
- A General Assembly Mission Council-led review of compensation policies in the agencies of the church in light of the 14 compensation principles adopted by the 2001 General Assembly; and
- A study that assesses the long-term implications of current economic trends in the United States and their impacts on the church.

International peacemaking

The Assembly called for the U.S. government to end direct combat operations in Afghanistan, the first time since the war began in 2001 that the Assembly has issued such a call. The action also calls for the United States to increase humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan.

On a broader front, the Assembly authorized a denominational study to consider new thinking and approaches to peacemaking and nonviolence, building on the PC(USA)’s 1980 statement “Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling.”

In other action related to peacemaking the Assembly called for:
- The United States to end use of seven military bases in Colombia;
- The peaceful reunification of North and South Korea;
- Prayers and advocacy to end violence and warfare in Sudan;
- Restoration of sustainable agriculture in Haiti;
- Restoration of democracy in Madagascar; and
- The protection of religious minorities around the world.
Outgoing Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick savored his final General Assembly business meeting on Saturday.

Photo by Joseph Williams

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Office of the General Assembly
100 Witherspoon Street
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What does the Lord require of you?

Sisters and brothers, sharing our common faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and walking humbly with our God, let us proceed to vote on the question before us…”

With those words, Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow and Vice-Moderator Byron Wade led the 218th General Assembly into prayerful decision-making on the nearly 1,000 items of business considered by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s highest governing body.

This was a deliberate Assembly, with few remonstrations of either protest or celebration. Despite critiques by partisans along the PC(USA) political and theological spectrum, the 218th General Assembly was a typical blend of the bold and the cautious as it:

► Approved a proposed amendment to delete G-6.0106b — the “fidelity and chastity” standard for church officers — but rejected a proposal to change the church’s definition of marriage from “a man and a woman” to “two people”;

► Reaffirmed the report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church, but turned back a major revision of the Form of Government, instead mandating two more years of study and further possible revisions;

► Expressed opposition to preemptive military action against Iran, but refused to support an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq;

► Supported a comprehensive peace proposal in Israel-Palestine based on the “two-state” solution, but rejected calls for temporary suspension of

The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the 218th General Assembly. Photo by Danny Bolin
Jim Kachler, a potter from Carmel Valley, CA, with the chalices he created for the GA communion.

**Ecumenism and interfaith understanding**

The Assembly approved by a vote of 547-149 a statement calling for tolerance and peaceful relations between Christians, Jews and Muslims. The Assembly said the three faiths share a common commitment to love God and neighbor and care for the poor.

Commissioners voted to strike language in the original overture from Newton Presbytery that would have said, “Jews, Christians and Muslims worship a common God, although each understands that God differently,” instead approving a statement that the three religions hold “differing understandings of how God has been revealed to humankind.”

An unusually large number of ecumenical visitors from around the world attended this Assembly, coming to pay tribute to Kirkpatrick as he concludes his service as stated clerk. They included Palestinian Archbishop Elias Chacour of Galilee, head of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, who preached at the Assembly’s Ecumenical Worship Service.

Dr. Muneer Fareaed, secretary general of the Islamic Society of North America, spoke on an interfaith perspectives panel at the Ecumenical Breakfast on Wednesday.

Ecumenical representatives Frank Kwame Aku of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Erica Brooks of the Lithuanian Evangelical Reformed Church, Chicago, and Wilbert Runyowa of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe exchanged contact information at the Stated Clerk’s Ecumenical dinner. Photo by Danny Bolin
Abortion

By a vote of 472-180, the Assembly directed appropriate PC(USA) entities to redevelop congregational resource materials on the subject of reproductive options to more adequately reflect the full spectrum of biblical, theological and pastoral counsel, while remaining consistent with the policy of the 1992 report of the Special Committee on Problem Pregnancies and Abortion and the 2006 policy on Late-Term Pregnancies and Abortion.

Since the PC(USA) first adopted a pro-choice policy on problem pregnancies and abortion in 1983, subsequent Assemblies have steadily sounded a more cautionary tone, maintaining support for a woman's right to choose, but urging all available alternatives to abortion.

Leaders

The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, 39, a new church development pastor in San Francisco and a leader in the “emergent church” movement, was elected moderator of the 218th General Assembly, capturing a second ballot victory. Reyes-Chow received 48 percent of the votes on the first ballot and swept to election with 55 percent on the second ballot over three other candidates — the Rev. Carl Mazza of New Castle Presbytery, Elder Roger Shoemaker of Homestead Presbytery and the Rev. William Teng of National Capital Presbytery.

Reyes-Chow — the grandson of Chinese and Filipino immigrants — reiterated his belief that “nothing is too hard or too wondrous for God. If the church steps out in faith rather than clinging to survival, to be more intent on being faithful than on being right, to be together based on our common covenant in Jesus Christ rather than by property or pensions, then we will be able to live into a future in which we are a vital and vibrant presence in the world.”

The Assembly confirmed the Rev. Byron Wade, 45, pastor of Davie Street Presbyterian Church of Raleigh, NC in New Hope Presbytery as vice-moderator. Wade and Reyes-Chow have been friends for more than 20 years.

In other actions related to leadership, the Assembly confirmed the reelection of Robert E. Leech as president of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation; the reelection of the Rev. James “Jay” Hudson as president of the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program; the election of Marc Lewis as president and publisher for the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation; and the election of the Rev. Brian Blount as president of Union Theological Seminary-Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, VA.
Gradye Parsons is new General Assembly stated clerk

The Rev. Gradye Parsons, associate stated clerk and director of operations for the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), won a first-ballot victory to succeed the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick as General Assembly stated clerk for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Kirkpatrick is stepping down after three four-year terms. Parsons has served in OGA for eight years after serving for six years as executive presbyter and stated clerk of Holston Presbytery in his native Tennessee.

Parsons, who was the choice of the Stated Clerk Nomination Committee, received 57 percent of the votes over three challengers: the Rev. Winfield “Casey” Jones, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Pearland, TX; the Rev. Ed Koster, stated clerk for Detroit Presbytery; and the Rev. William Tarbell, pastor of Saluda (SC) Presbyterian Church.

Parsons called fear “the overriding issue in the church — everybody’s afraid that for some reason or another the church is going to close in two weeks.” He said his favorite Bible story is the story in Luke 8:22-25 — Jesus in the boat, asleep, with his disciples when the storm comes up. “Jesus wakes up and asks, ‘Where is your faith?’”

Parsons said, “The middle of the lake is pretty scary and you can’t see the other shore, but a mantra I recite to myself regularly is ‘Get in the boat; go across the lake; there will be a storm; you will not die.’”

So it is for the PC(USA), he told the Assembly after his installation. “We are in this together because God has put us together,” Parsons said. “Now let’s go make Jesus proud of our church.”

Women of Faith

The three Women of Faith recipients honored this year were Theodora (Thea) G. Jackson, a member of First Presbyterian Church in Katonah, NY, the Rev. Magdalena I. Garcia, pastor of Ravenswood Presbyterian Church, a multicultural and bilingual congregation in Chicago, and the Rev. Ann L. Hayman from Santa Monica, CA, founder of the Mary Magdalene Project. Because of ill health Jackson was not present to receive her award personally but sent a recorded acceptance speech.

A new Social Creed

By a vote of 552-110, the Assembly approved “A Social Creed for the 21st Century,” exactly 100 years after the “Social Creed” of 1908 spoke to the harshness of industrial life at the turn of the 20th century.

The new creed, which is being considered by many U.S. denominations, addresses contemporary working conditions, globalization and environmental concerns. It calls for pay equity, greater workplace health and safety, criminal rehabilitation through restorative justice, abolition of the death penalty, tax and budget policies that reduce disparities between rich and poor, affordable housing, sustainable use of resources and just immigration policies.

Actor, author and human rights activist Mike Farrell spoke at the General Assembly Media Luncheon on Sunday. Farrell is known for his television work on M*A*S*H and Providence and is the author of Just Call Me Mike. Photo by Danny Bolin

Jazz pianist Harry Rickens performed at the Peacemaking dinner on Wednesday. Photo by Danny Bolin

Laticia Huston performed in The Name of the Rain, a drama about survival and hope in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, presented by South Louisiana Presbytery’s Project Homecoming. Photo by Danny Bolin
Middle East war and peace

By a vote of 504-171, the Assembly endorsed the “Amman Call” for Israel-Palestine, a plan developed at a World Council of Churches-sponsored conference in the Jordanian capital last year. The proposal includes affirmation of United Nations resolutions that are the basis of a projected “two-state” solution in Israel-Palestine, a shared Jerusalem, guarantees of human rights for refugees and occupied peoples, and a call to resist extremism and push for reconciliation.

At the same time, the Assembly rejected a call for the suspension of U.S. military aid to Israel until it abides by U.S. laws governing the use of arms against civilians and internationally recognized human rights guarantees. It also rejected a call to single out Motorola and Caterpillar for consideration for divestment due to their business activities in support of Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.

The Assembly affirmed the efforts of all those who are seeking peace in Iraq, but stopped short of calling for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from that country.

And the Assembly voted to oppose preemptive military action by any nation against Iran.

Form of Government revision deferred for two years

By a vote of 624-88, the General Assembly voted to refer the proposed revision of the church’s Form of Government back to the Office of the General Assembly “for a period of study and consultation with churches and presbyteries.” The revision was mandated by the 2006 General Assembly and designed to help the governing bodies of the PC(USA) be more missional and to give them more flexibility in organizing their mission efforts.

The proposed revision included two documents: “Foundations of Presbyterian Polity” and “Revised Form of Government.” The Foundations document reorganizes the material in the first four chapters of the Book of Order. The Revised Form of Government condenses and streamlines the remaining 14 chapters of the Book of Order into six chapters.

The new timeline calls for a revised proposal to be submitted to the stated clerk in October 2009 for distribution to the church by mid-January 2010 for consideration by the 219th (2010) General Assembly.
Ordination standards

By a vote of 380-325, the Assembly voted to send a proposed amendment to the denomination’s 173 presbyteries that would delete the current paragraph G-6.0106b in the Book of Order — which requires church officers to live in “fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness” — and replace it with a new G-6.0106b.

The proposed new G-6.0106b ties ordination decisions more closely to ordination vows currently in the church’s Book of Order without singling out a sexual conduct standard. The proposed new G-6.0106b reads:

"Those who are called to ordained service in the church, by their assent to the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003), pledge themselves to live lives obedient to Jesus Christ the Head of the Church, striving to follow where he leads through the witness of the Scriptures, and to understand the Scriptures through the instruction of the Confessions. In so doing, they declare their fidelity to the standards of the Church.

Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate’s sincere efforts to adhere to these standards."

The debate now moves to the denomination’s presbyteries, which in 1997 and 2000 rejected proposals to delete G-6.0106b.

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Each governing body charged with examination for ordination and/or installation (G-14.0240 and G-14.0450) establishes the candidate’s sincere efforts to adhere to these standards."

Catechisms and confessions

The General Assembly voted 436-280 to initiate the process that would “correct translation problems in five responses of the Heidelberg Catechism in The Book of Confessions and add the original scriptural texts of the 1562 German catechism.

When The Book of Confessions was adopted by the former United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1967, it included a 1962 translation of the Heidelberg Catechism that has since been found to include “illicit” changes.

Most of the Assembly’s attention focused on Question 87 of the catechism in which the 1962 translators inserted the phrase “homosexual perversion.” That phrase does not appear in the original German text nor in any other existing translation of the Heidelberg Catechism except the PC(USA)’s version. A special committee will study the proposal and bring back a recommendation to the Assembly in 2010.

A special committee will also study a recommendation to include the Belhar Confession in The Book of Confessions, using the same rubric as for the Heidelberg Catechism. The Belhar Confession was written in 1986 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa to address the apartheid situation in that country, but it also points to the persistent sin of racism globally.

The Assembly set the General Assembly per capita apportionment at $6.15 for 2009 and 2010, up 36 cents.
Mission and evangelism

The Assembly approved a Strategy for Church Growth for African-American Congregations and a new three-pronged outreach emphasis called “Grow God’s Church Deep and Wide.”

Noting that African Americans have been a strong witness in the PC(USA) for more than 200 years, the Assembly approved the strategy in response to a mandate to grow the racial ethnic membership of the denomination to 20 percent by 2010. African American membership in the PC(USA) rose to 3.1 percent in 2007.

“Grow God’s Church Deep and Wide” aims to gather best practices from PC(USA) congregations around the country for use by all congregations in growing in membership, discipleship and diversity.

For more information, visit the Web site (http://deepandwide.ning.com).

The Assembly unanimously endorsed “An Invitation to Expanding Participation in God’s Mission,” an agreement growing out of a mission consultation in Dallas last winter that promises greater cooperation to support Presbyterian mission than has been seen in the PC(USA) in many years. The Assembly urged all Presbyterian governing bodies and mission groups to accept the invitation. For more information about the Invitation, visit the Web site: www.pcusa.org/calltomission/read-invite.htm.

Mission Initiative: Joining Hearts and Hands honorary chair Thomas Gillespie told the Assembly that the five-year campaign to raise funds for new overseas mission personnel and new church development in this country, particularly new racial ethnic and immigrant churches, succeeded in raising more than $33 million. The goal of the campaign, which concluded at this Assembly, was $40 million.

Elder Melva Costen, a commissioner from Greater Atlanta Presbytery, remembers the reunion of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) to form the PC(USA) 25 years ago. Her husband James was the 1982 moderator of the UPCUSA. Photo by Danny Bolin

Past moderator Marj Carpenter accepted the 2008 David Steele Distinguished Writer Award at the Presbyterian Writers Guild Luncheon. Photo by Joseph Williams

Drew Keller of First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto, CA, led the invitation to Communion at Sunday’s worship service at the San Jose State University Event Center. Photo by Joseph Williams

Psalmist Mary D. Williams sang at the Hungryhearts Gospel Blues Breakfast, sponsored by the General Assembly Council Office of Spiritual Formation. Photo by Danny Bolin

Psalmist Mary D. Williams sang at the Hungryhearts Gospel Blues Breakfast, sponsored by the General Assembly Council Office of Spiritual Formation. Photo by Danny Bolin

Elder Jeri Nordstrom, a commissioner from Olympia Presbytery, told stories about her Tlingit heritage at the Native American Consulting Committee dinner. Photo by Joseph Williams

Mental interpretation of G-6.0108 that applies the historical practice of “scrupling” — the declaration of conscientious objection by candidates for ordination coupled with discernment by the ordaining body whether the declared objection is disqualifying — equally to all ordination standards of the denomination. The authoritative interpretation reaffirms the scrupling practice affirmed by the 217th General Assembly when it approved the report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church and effectively overturns a recent General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission ruling — Bush vs. Presbytery of Pittsburgh — that G-6.0106b cannot be scrupled. The vote was 375-325.

Alan Villevsk tries on an alter ego with the Calvin mask, in honor of John Calvin’s Jubilee. Photo by Danny Bolin

Elder Jeri Nordstrom, a commissioner from Olympia Presbytery, told stories about her Tlingit heritage at the Native American Consulting Committee dinner. Photo by Joseph Williams
Worship

“What would have happened if the good Samaritan had not gotten involved? But he got his hands dirty. And I invite you Presbyterians to get your hands dirty, to get involved.”
— Archbishop Elias Chacour of Galilee, Melkite Greek Catholic Church

“It’s clear that racism is a philosophical construct, one invented by Christian nations to absolve themselves of the atrocities of empire, and that self-deception continues to undergird American life.”
— the Rev. Jin S. Kim, Church of All Nations, Columbia Heights, MN

“We should start each day by looking in the mirror and saying, ‘I am not the Messiah.’ The opposite of humility is not arrogance — it is ignorance.”
— the Rev. Dan Chun, First Presbyterian Church, Honolulu

“A walk with God is not an action we do, it is a relationship. The Lord wants us to be walking together.”
— the Rev. Thomas Daniel, First Presbyterian Church, Evanston, IL

“We have the opportunity here and now to repent in our complicity in the destructive systems of the world — not because we hate the world, but because we want to be more fully in it.”
— the Rev. Cynthia Rigby, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

“The church is not meant to be an endeavor that is powered by human nature. The church is meant to be a God-powered institution.”
— the Rev. Joan Gray, moderator, 217th General Assembly

“Walking humbly with God means we have to be one with God. Looking at us is about the closest thing people will see when they think of Jesus.”
— the Rev. Diane Givens-Moffett, St. James Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC
### Office of the General Assembly

#### Core Competencies

| 1. Resilient Leadership | • Ability to effectively lead and manage in a changing landscape where the currents are fluid and realities continue to shift  
• Capacity to handle technical or human challenges through applied emotional intelligence |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2. Global Cultural Diversity | • Ability to work, communicate and lead in an increasingly diverse environment in ways that maximize engagement and facilitate inclusion  
• Capacity to model acceptance and build trust and respect in their leadership and in the policies and practices of OGA across differences |
| 3. Collaboration for Innovation | • Ability to lay the foundation and execute the steps required in building and maintaining collaborative teams and relationships.  
• Capacity to balance facilitation and dialogue to enable deep listening and innovative thinking and decision making cross different perspectives |
| 4. Virtual Leadership | • Ability to effectively lead in virtual formats in ways that maximize participation.  
• Capacity to facilitate and sustain engagement in the absence of live meetings and interventions |
| 5. Financial Acumen | • Ability to understand the basic financial framework of OGA and their area(s) of responsibility  
• Capacity to make decisions within the context of known and projected financial realities |
| 6. Negotiation and Mediation | • Ability to effectively handle conflicts through the appropriate use of negotiation and mediation skills.  
• Capacity to navigate through difficult negotiation / mediation interventions and land on results / agreements that people are willing to own. |
| 7. Technological Acumen | • Ability to understand the use of technology to facilitate innovative and creative thinking  
• Capacity to apply or direct the application of technological solutions |
Introduction: About this Journey*

"Nature is able to recover from almost anything because of its bio-diversity: the structural biodiversity and the species biodiversity. -- This is the underlying basis of resilience in systems. We must find a way to replicate that if we have any chance of survival."
-- P. 110 -

This was never a traditional request for support in downsizing and restructuring an organization to meet financial challenges. To the credit of the Stated Clerk, Gradye Parsons, it was instead, a desire to exercise thought, strategy and discernment in shaping a new future for OGA by transforming a difficult challenge into an exciting opportunity. We thus saw this work as a combination of strategic thinking and change management, along with organizational re-envisioning and re-design.

From our first visit to OGA and our early interviews, we knew that this was a special place. A culture grounded in faith and passion for their work and the OGA Mission, had created a close knit community that often felt more like a family than a collection of seasoned experts. Like a family, this community was not perfect – no family is – and had its share of challenging interpersonal dynamics running through the system like a steady and rustling river. Raising above all this and mitigating its impact, was a strong core of values and principles, rooted in faith that made the impossible at least seem possible from the start.

A key part of the formula was the OGA Mission statement which we kept front and center in our minds throughout the process:

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Office of the General Assembly will:
Encourage the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to be a people of hope –
  • Seeking together the mind of Christ
  • Working for justice and mercy in the world, and
  • Participating in God's continual reformation of the Church

We saw all of this as an opportunity to not only provide guidance and expertise in meeting their structural and financial objectives but to also position OGA as a key player and partner in a shared inquiry around the future of PC USA. It was a tough assignment and will continue to be a tough journey with more hard work ahead but from what we have seen, the bio-diversity of OGA’s leadership, staff and structure (even as it prepares for transformation) has the capacity to bring them through with unimaginable results!

*Note – All quotes at the beginning of each section of this report come from the book “Resilience” by Andrew Zolli & Ann Marie Healy
Overview: Steps in the Process

“Scale is not the enemy, only the wrong kind of scale” -- P. 115

Similar to the quote above, process is not the enemy, only the wrong process. This process was carefully designed based on our assessment of the readiness of OGA to undergo a complex change and transition process. Once we realized under the Stated Clerk’s leadership that the change process had already been initiated - that discussions about “change” and preliminary visioning while not completed had already been kindled with senior staff and other stakeholders, we knew that the conditions for success were in place.

Based on that assessment as well best practice in the field of organizational change and transition, we shaped the process for OGA in five steps:

I. Discovery – Document review; individual interviews, group sessions, observations, and core team meetings to identify key themes and insights to factor into the rest of the process

II. Fiscal Options Development – Financial Review followed by presentation to the Stated Clerk of options for budget adjustments in light of revenue projections

III. Structure Options Development – identification of restructuring options based on all the above.

IV. Human Resource Reallocation – driven by the Stated Clerk and informed by the cumulative intelligence generated by the process up to that point. In this instance this will also be informed in part by the result of a Voluntary Separation package offered at the beginning of 2013.

V. Next Steps: Senior Staff Presentation and Dialogue / COGA Presentation / Internal and External Communication / Implementation – Transition Planning

What’s significant about this process is that human resource reallocation does not occur, as is so often the case in these types of processes, at the front end of the process.

What is also significant is the depth and breadth of the Discovery Process as evidenced by the 90+ individuals we interfaced with in individual interviews both formal and informal, group sessions at the Polity Conference and with COGA, and several observation opportunities.

The process began in August of 2012 and was designed to reach the stage we are currently in January of 2013 where finance and structure options have been shared with the Stated Clerk and decisions have been made and ready for discussion and input from senior staff. The results will be reported to COGA in February or March.
Key Themes

"It turns out that Goldilocks had it right all along: Resilience is often found in having just the "right" amounts of these properties ---being connected, but not too connected; being diverse, but not too diverse; being able to couple with other systems when it helps, but also being able to decouple from them when it hurts. The picture that emerges is one of strategic looseness, an intentional stance of both fluidity (of strategies, structures, and actions) and fixedness (of values and purpose). --- P 259-260

In Discovery processes like this one, given the wide range of interviewees, a detailed analysis is often required to uncover the distinctions in the data based on who the respondent is. In this case, the data themes were consistent from the beginning no matter who we talked to. One reason for this from our perspective is that there was definitely a “readiness for change” within OGA and the system at large and that conversations about change were not new. Consequently, while everyone did not have the same perspective with respect to solution sets and ways for OGA to work differently given current and potential financial and cultural challenges, the following themes were consistent:

OGA needs to work Smarter:
- Fewer Directors and fewer staff – eliminate what is seen as excess - too many people with narrow spans of focus and control.
- More collaborative mode of operation – to leverage talent and resources and share internal resources with a keener Mission focus
- Flexible structure – a more flexible, practical and proactive structure that evolves with the changing landscape and needs of the church vs. the current silo mode of operation

OGA needs to work more efficiently:
- More strategic use of technology to:
  - Get beyond the “wall of paper.”
  - Support the work of OGA in areas like “Compliance” through online resources
  - Facilitate training within and across current areas of expertise as well as internal communication and sharing of best practices
  - Enable more effective virtual communication and meetings.
  - Reduce the cost of the PHS operation

OGA needs to become more User / Customer Friendly
While OGA was generally seen by external stakeholders as seasoned and experienced in what they do and provide for the church in comparison to others, there were also some suggested ways to improve in this area:
- Clarify the role of volunteer in relation to staff
- Remove all redundancy and joint positions with PMA
- Increase diversity and cultural competence to lead in a multi-cultural society.

One comment made by many both within and outside of OGA is for OGA to have more intentionality and play a keener role in leading the Church God is calling us to become! This usually included references to providing more support, directly or indirectly for Pastors, Churches and Presbyteries in transition and leading the way in terms of Change and Transition.
OGA needs a flatter and leaner organizational Structure:
During the course of the interview process many staff offered examples of organizational models. Others described what they thought would work best. For the most part these fell into two broad categories: A Flat Organization working with and reporting to the Stated Clerk; Three or Four Interlocking Teams that foster collaboration within and between each Team. In either case, silos needed to be eliminated and a more collaborative model put in place.

Who we spoke to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OGA Staff – over 30</th>
<th>Polity Session - 16 participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Committee Moderators – 8</td>
<td>COGA – 15 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHS Board Members – 15</td>
<td>Informal external stakeholders – 12 (in NJ and Minneapolis – for on the ground context)</td>
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The interview data was supplemented by review of over 30 internal documents and intense work with the Core Team consisting of the Stated Clerk along with Tom, Director, Operations and G.A. Meeting Service, Associated Stated Clerk and Loyda, Director, Department of the Stated Clerk and Human Resources, Associated Stated Clerk.

Finally, it is important to note that while people were anxious for different reasons, we felt that their comments were shared openly and with love and respect for the type of community that OGA had become and with trust and faith that God had a bigger plan in store for all. Like Goldilocks in the quote above, people knew that change had to come and some things had to be different, but there was also a strong desire to hold onto a core set of principles and practices even as the New OGA unfolds.
Moving from Data to Insight

“We see a great confluence of factors coming together --- the right systems and structures, the right technologies and information, the right kinds of community empowerment, and the right values and habits of mind.” P — 275

Change and Transition processes cannot be effective without a Vision statement that describes what will be different as a result. One of the outputs of the work with the Core Team based in part on their discussions with staff, as well as their review, reflection and internalization of the data collected was a draft Vision for the New OGA:

OGA is focused on leading the PC (USA) as it meets an uncharted future with the ability and capacity to serve diverse constituencies with a multi-disciplined staff.

This Vision statement will need to be the focus of many internal and external discussions and dialogues as this process continues to unfold. It will eventually be accompanied by a fairly detailed statement that unravels the meaning of key words and phrases like “leading the PC (USA” and what it means to have the “ability and capacity to serve diverse constituencies” with a “multi-disciplined staff.” Some tweaks and adjustments may occur along the way as this statement transforms into a template for the future as the New OGA begins to emerge and God’s plan is revealed.

Another key element of a change and transition process is clarity around Core Competencies that will be needed to work differently together in a system and world that will continue to change and shift. Out of this discussion with the Core Team came the following list of Core Competencies:

1. Resilient Leadership
2. Global Cultural Competencies
3. Collaboration for Innovation
4. Virtual Leadership
5. Financial Acumen
6. Negotiation and Mediation
7. Technical Acumen

Before reviewing the detailed chart on the next page, think about what these skills and competencies mean to you, their relevance to the emerging “New OGA” and what from your perspective might be missing. These competencies will become the template from which deeper work will be done during the implementation process.
## Draft OGA Core Competencies

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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| **1. Resilient Leadership** | • Ability to effectively lead and manage in a changing landscape where the currents are fluid and realities continue to shift  
• Capacity to handle technical or human challenges through applied emotional intelligence |
| **2. Global Cultural Diversity** | • Ability to work, communicate and lead in an increasingly diverse environment in ways that maximize engagement and facilitate Inclusion  
• Capacity to model acceptance and build trust and respect in their leadership and in the policies and practices of OGA across differences |
| **3. Collaboration for Innovation** | • Ability to lay the foundation and execute the steps required in building and maintaining collaborative teams and relationships.  
• Capacity to balance facilitation and dialogue to enable deep listening and innovative thinking and decision making cross different perspectives |
| **4. Virtual Leadership** | • Ability to effectively lead in virtual formats in ways that maximize participation.  
• Capacity to facilitate and sustain engagement in the absence of live meetings and interventions |
| **5. Financial Acumen** | • Ability to understand the basic financial framework of OGA and their area(s) of responsibility  
• Capacity to make decisions within the context of known and projected financial realities |
| **6. Negotiation and Mediation** | • Ability to effectively handle conflicts through the appropriate use of negotiation and mediation skills.  
• Capacity to navigate through difficult negotiation / mediation interventions and land on results / agreements that people are willing to own. |
| **7. Technological Acumen** | • Ability to understand the use of technology to facilitate innovative and creative thinking  
• Capacity to apply or direct the application of technological solutions |
“Adhocracies thrive on data. And by a stroke of fantastic luck, we’re currently witnessing the global birth of an adhocracy of data—a global revolution that, for the first time, empowers organizations with the capacity to collect and correlate widely distributed real-time information about the way many critical systems are performing.” P -- 266

DHA and the Core Team worked through a process of fiscal review that began with a broad review of the OGA budget as a whole, followed by functional specific inquiries along with the consideration of a number of ‘why/what if questions and scenario’s.’ Our collaborative work began with an understanding that the intended goal was to reach a net budget reduction of 1M by the end of 2013 and an additional 1M by the end of 2014. It also included a process known as RAI in which budget options are derived through Retraction, following by Adjustment and always keeping in mind the need for Investment into the financial health of the organization.

The overarching assumption guiding our review of OGA Financials was to seek an initial set of opportunities to make fiscal adjustments that would first address ‘operational functioning’ followed by structure and finally human resources. Along the way, we were cognizant of the fact that similar processes choose to address the human factors first but in this case we sought to base final staff decisions on baseline fiscal, business operations and structure decisions. Keeping in mind the expressed desire of OGA leadership to use fiscal constraints as new currency to move mission forward, fiscal adjustments were intended to provide the following:

1. **Opportunities to reduce cost outlays without fundamentally changing operational intent.** This is basically about reducing cost projections with the intent to work smarter by applying alternative ways of working. These might include opportunities to change business practices – i.e. internal collections and moving over 12 – 18 month to outsourcing some activities. It might also involve applying new and robust collaborating technologies to reduce the current COC or Cost of Collaboration which is quite high.

2. **Adjusting departmental budgets through ‘retraction’ to fit more closely with the ecclesiastical intentions of the OGA.** In this case we were looking for ways to balance the realities of reduced per capita income with opportunities where appropriate to apply “fee for service” practices to offset projected reductions. (Example - application fees, appellate review fees, up-front payment practices related to the GA and eliminating other service fees where appropriate)

3. **Re-imagining and re-aligning the PHS operation over a 3-5 year period.** Technology could potentially play a very strong role in reducing the overall longer term cost of managing the mandated function of record retention and capacity to provide timely historical research.

4. **Adjusting the entire OGA budget to reflect a revenue balance between per capita, fee for service and other external fund raising efforts.** As an example, there are opportunities to frame Immigration, Archiving, Ecumenical Relations and Support as externally fundable based on potential donor interests to sustain the work of OGA.

5. **Developing a set of operational investments that will support an aggressive shift to l**

6. **Leading with Technologies.** This might include a new Fund Raising function including Friends of OGA, together with new practices in leveraging volunteers and managing significant on-line deliberation tools.
The resulting intelligence from the items above provided the Core Team with a projected set of ‘savings’ from restructuring major areas of ministry, business practices and organizational alignment. These activities provided a set of human resource reductions, adjustments and trade-offs that will support implementation decisions.

During the course of this engagement we worked in partnership with OGA’s internal finance function to produce “working models for review and consideration by The Stated Clerk.

We reviewed the current OGA budget through the following lens:

1. Ecclesial / Mission (PMA) Axis (note: eliminating all overlap and funding entanglement’s)
2. Collaboration (meeting) requirements and alternative approaches
3. Business Practice Improvement Opportunities
4. Alternative funding ‘projected’ opportunities
5. Strength enhancements (How best to build on OGA strengths of collaboration, consultation, compliance management and innovative problem/opportunity resolution)

Ultimately, final budgetary decisions and the implementation of our collective work will rest with The Stated Clerk and “New OGA Leadership Team”
Structure

“We usually bias in the direction of the bureaucracy, rather than away from it. What’s needed is an approach that complements these silos of excellence and works in the white spaces between them, where resilience (and social innovation) is so often found. That’s what resilient organizations, and their translational leaders, do: They create the opportunity, connectivity, permission and encouragement of people to meet in the white spaces. The leadership imperative in such circumstances is centered on influence and coordination, not command and control.” P --- 266

Grounded in faith, hope and the OGA vision, DHA and the Core Team worked through an extensive process that included deep reflection on the key findings and their implications for Structure and Leadership of The New OGA going forward. This process included a methodology that considered current and projected future needs of the Church as well as the organization’s ministry tradition of “responding, renewing, reclaiming, reforming and rejoicing.”

It should be noted that input from staff and stakeholders points to a strong preference for alignment to the ecclesial mission, a collaborative work design, innovation and focused support of regional expressions of the church. As a result, recommended design options for the New OGA were crafted to facilitate functioning as a flexible, collaborative and fluid organization that works across a set of recommended Areas of Ministry. We were also careful to equip The New OGA in a way that would enhance operational capacities and diffuse power across work domains to achieve mission intentions and the organization’s vision.

After careful consideration by The Stated Clerk, these activities resulted in a new structure that will focus the work of OGA across (3) essential areas of Ministry. The (3) areas of Ministry include the following:

1. **National Ministries** – Providing the opportunities for national discernment and engaging the of the church’s ministry.
2. **Mid Council Ministries** – Resourcing the life of the church in the Mid Councils and ministries of Teaching and Ruling Elder.
3. **Ecclesial and Ecumenical Ministries** – Directly supporting the Office of the Stated Clerk and the Ecumenical vision of the Church.

The Leadership Vision going forward includes a commitment to ministry, collaboration and shared leadership. This model includes an over-arching leadership team for The New OGA that includes (9) key positions all working in collaboration within and across areas of ministry together with The Stated Clerk. Each *area of ministry* will include (3) Associated Stated Clerks who will share leadership for that ministry along with identified areas of work to support the Vision of The New OGA. These areas of work include the following:

1. **National Ministries Leadership Team**: Associate Stated Clerks for: General Assembly Meetings, Records + History (PHS) and Innovation and Engagement
2. **Mid Council Ministries Leadership Team**: Associate Stated Clerks for: Constitutional Interpretation, Vocational Services and Mid Council Relations
3. **Ecclesial and Ecumenical Ministries Leadership Team**: Associate Stated Clerks for: Ecumenical Relations, Operational Ministries and Communications

This structure should not only facilitate collaboration and innovation, but allow as stated in the opening quote for Translational Leadership to occur where OGA works not only within and across work domains, but in the “white spaces” where people come together to create innovative solutions to real time challenges.
Note: The Graphic and Chart below further break out the areas covered by each area of ministry.
ECCLESIAL AND ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES

Directly supporting the office of Stated Clerk and the Ecumenical Vision of the church.

Leadership Team:
Associate Stated Clerks for:
1. Ecumenical Relations
2. Operational Ministries
3. Communications

Covering:
- COGA
- Ecumenical Relations
  - GACIER
- Communications
- Moderator Support
- Technology
- Funds Development
- Human Resources
- Finance

MID COUNCIL MINISTRIES

Resourcing the life of the church in the Mid Councils and the ministries of Teach and Ruling Elder.

Leadership Team:
Associate Stated Clerks for:
1. Constitutional Interpretation
2. Vocational Services
3. Mid Council Relations

Covering:
- Support of Constitutional Interpretation Committees:
  - ACC
  - GAPJC
  - Litigation
  - COR
- Support of Mid Councils:
  - New Clerk Training
  - CoM and CPM
  - Ordination Exams
- Mid Council Relations Coordinator
- Office on Immigration
- Vocation Services

NATIONAL MINISTRIES

Providing the Opportunities of national discernment and preserving the records of the church’s ministry.

Leadership Team:
Associate Stated Clerks for:
1. General Assembly Meetings
2. Records and History
3. Innovation and Engagement

Covering:
- Meeting and Conference Planning
  - General Assembly
  - National Conferences
  - Meeting Support
- Support of GA Permanent and Special Committees:
  - GANC
  - GA Task Forces
- Translation services
- Records and History
  - Minutes of the assembly
  - Statistics
  - PHS
- Innovation and Engagement partnerships
Next Steps – At the Intersection of Hope and Transition

"The more beautiful the vision, the more complicated the execution" --- P. 112

A 1951 high school graduation theme from a school in Savannah, GA perfectly describes the where this process of organization change and transition is at this point in time:

“We have crossed the River but the Ocean lies ahead!

1. Starting with the Senior Staff the process of vetting, discussion and personal goal setting starts at a deeper level.
2. Communication within and outside of OGA needs to be discussed and strategically aligned
3. Transition strategies need to be put in place to build a bridge to the Implementation process.

The process will not be easy and certainly not neat. But this is where you will need to rely on the trust and support that has gotten you this far as well as the voice and direction of God as he continues to work with us during this process.

Looking forward to our discussion of this report and next steps at, our Senior Staff Meeting on January 31st.
In November, we launched our new Integrated Library System. Calvin is now a modern online public access catalog with the ability to filter results, save lists, and easily share information about our holdings.

On December 2, PHS participated in Giving Tuesday for the first time, raising enough funds through social media efforts to provide two additional churches with Heritage Preservation Grants.

We awarded four $500 Heritage Preservation Grants to the following PC(USA) congregations: Wyalusing Presbyterian Church (Wyalusing, Pa.), organized in 1793; First Presbyterian Church (Livingston, Ala.), organized in 1833; Linn Presbyterian Church (Lake Geneva, Wis.), organized in 1844; and Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church (Tuscaloosa, Ala.), organized in 1886.

We worked with PC(USA) Research Services on a Presbyterian Panel survey on PHS, slated to go out in March 2015. We will use the results of the survey to inform our strategic planning, including a possible Congregation Membership Program.

We published the Fall/Winter issue of The Journal of Presbyterian History, which featured an article about the New England Watch and Ward Society’s anti-vice campaigns during the Progressive Era. For the first time, we produced this issue both in print and electronic format with the interactive PDF going to Patron-level members of our Membership Program.

Volunteer Peter Eckman is scanning church postcards from the PHS collection for inclusion in Wikimedia Commons. See them here.

We received the final Preservation Needs Assessment report in January from the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts. CCAHA evaluated the Society’s policies, procedures, and collection spaces and made recommendations for improving the overall preservation of the collections. PHS staff members are working on some short-term objectives identified in the report and discussing how to address objectives for the medium-term (1 to 3 years) and long-term (3 to 8 years).

In January, we began digitizing nitrate sheet-film in our collection. Nitrate film is highly flammable, and as it degrades, the risk of auto-ignition increases. We hold a relatively small amount of nitrate negatives, which date from the late 1910s up through the early 1940s. We have prioritized digitization based on content and condition. After the negatives are digitized, we will safely dispose of the nitrate film.

We are working to configure our digital asset management system, which will organize, display, and describe digital materials in our collection, with public access through our website. We have named the new system Pearl (inspired by Pearl Buck but with other connotations as well.) We’ll now have Calvin (the online catalog) and Pearl (the online DAMS). The next several months will be a soft launch as we create display forms and load digital objects. We plan to do a “big splash” launch this summer.

The PHS loan from PILP (Phase 1 for $330,000) closed on February 9. The loan, previously approved by the PHS Board, the Stated Clerk and COGA, will fund replacement of the main chiller in our HVAC system and renovation of our cobblestone sidewalks. Both projects will commence this spring.
FOR INFORMATION

- John Wood and Lorraine Brown staffed the Executive Director Search Committee and participated in phone and in-person interviews. (Ginny Rainey is the COGA representative on the committee).

**Year-End Statistics**

**Technical Services**

- We accessioned 517 groups of archival material in 2014, amounting to 885.30 cubic feet. This is the second highest annual volume of records accessioned since the year 2000.
- During the year, we switched from shooting microfilm to digitizing records. For 2014, we completed 42 microfilming orders (54,077 frames filmed) and 41 digitization orders (24,736 images).
- We cataloged 1,151 items in 2014 and created 113 new name authority records through the Library of Congress. In 2013, we cataloged 995 items and created 125 new name authority records.

**Reference**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
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<th>change</th>
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<td>total inquiries</td>
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</table>

- The most significant change was in the number of image reproductions we handled. There was a 429% increase from 2013 to 2014. Not surprisingly, there was also an increase in the number of products our work helped support, but only a 13% increase, which suggests that, when applicable, the number of images per product was higher.

- **Services:** In 2014, 42% of inquiries (1573) related to our services. We provided the most assistance with Records Management (374), Transcripts/Education Verification (348), and Attestation (295) services.
- **Topics:** In 2014, 75% of inquiries (2762) were coded with a topic. Of these, the most popular topics were Genealogy (607), General History (541), Admin/Legal/Fiscal (386), and Mission History (355). Compared to 2013, inquiries about Images, Preservation, and Mission History increased (by 48%, 40%, and 26% respectively), while inquiries about Admin/Legal/Fiscal issues, Bio Info, and Copyright/Permission decreased (by 30%, 11%, and 11% respectively).
- **Types of users:** 50% of our users in 2014 were categorized as General Public (1837), PC(USA) entities made up the next largest category of users (28% or 1,050), followed by Students/Faculty (11% or 410). PC(USA) Congregations (493) were 13% of our total users and 47% of our
PC(USA)-affiliated users. Compared to 2013, the percentage of General Public users was down by 1% and the percentage of PC(USA) entities was up by 1%.

❖ Development & Communications

• In 2014, a total of $385,621.86 was contributed to PHS, $28,224.66 more than was contributed in 2013, resulting in a 7% increase in overall contributed income.
• PHS successfully met the Board’s Challenge Match, raising a total of $40,000 in new and increased gifts in 2014.
• PHS-Matters: a total of 1,414 people received the monthly newsletter in December 2014, 240 more than in December 2013.
• Facebook: we had 700 followers at the end of 2014, 223 more than in December 2013.
• We started posting on Twitter and Instagram in September 2014. At the end of the year on Twitter, we had 176 followers and followed 311 people. On Instagram, we had 66 followers.
FOR ACTION:

Election of PHS Board Member

The Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society recommends to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) that Ernest Higginbotham be elected to serve on the Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society to a four-year term as part of the Class of 2019:

Ernest R. Higginbotham

Personal

313 South Pearl Expressway
Dallas, Texas 75201
214-394-1159 (mobile)
erhigg@gmail.com

Spouse: Donna McKay
Children: Pierce Ryan Higginbotham (26), Ethan James Higginbotham (24); since 11-11-12: Ann McKay Sanchez (44), Rebecca McKay (41), Susan McKay (37)

Grandchildren: 7

Education

University of Texas School of Law, J.D. (with honors) 1973
Order of the Coif; Texas Law Review

Princeton University, A.B. (cum laude) 1968
History major

Carthage High School, Carthage, Texas 1964

Employment

UnitedLex Corporation (2008 – present)
Global legal consulting, technology and outsourcing company
Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Government Affairs
Assists corporate and law firm clients in managing electronic stored information (ESI) in litigation

Nortel Networks (2001-2007)
Vice President, Litigation
Global responsibility for supervising and managing all Nortel's litigation;

Partner since 1980; early retirement as Senior Partner
Practice focused on antitrust and business litigation
Supreme Court of Texas (1973-74)
Briefing Attorney for Justice Ruel C. Walker

United States Army (1968-70)
First Lieutenant, Field Artillery
Combat service in Vietnam and Cambodia
Two Bronze Stars, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal for Valor

Professional

- Admitted to practice law in Texas in 1973
- State Bar of Texas Antitrust and Business Litigation Section (Chairman 1988-89, Council Member 1980-92). Member of the Litigation Sections of both the State Bar of Texas and the American Bar Association...
- American Law Institute (Life Member); American Bar Foundation (Life Fellow); Texas Bar Foundation (Life Fellow); Dallas Bar Foundation (Charter Fellow); Texas Law Review Association (President 1989-90, Director 1986-98, Life Member)

Church

First Presbyterian Church of Dallas (1985 - present)
  Ruling Elder (Vice Moderator of Session 1989-91, 2001-03)
  Sunday School teacher (1986 - present)
  Sesquicentennial Steering Committee (Chair 2003-06)
  Capital Campaign, 2008 (Steering Committee; Leadership Campaign Director)
  The Stewpot
  Second Chance Café meal service volunteer
  Family Stabilization Food Program lead volunteer

First Presbyterian Church of Dallas Foundation (President 1999-2000, Trustee 1995-2000)

First Presbyterian Church of Dallas Corporation (President 2009-2010, Trustee 2008-2010)

First Presbyterian Church of Richardson (1975-85)
  Ruling Elder 1981-84
  Sunday School teacher 1980-85

Grace Presbytery
  Legal counsel 1986 - present
  General Presbytery Search Committee 2009-10

Synod of the Sun
  Stated Clerk 2010 - 2013
  Assistant Stated Clerk, 2013 - Present

Presbyterian Historical Society of the Southwest (Director 2010-2013)

Greater Dallas Community of Churches (President 1988 and 2005, Director 1985-2006)
Civic

UNT Dallas College of Law (Louis A. Bedford Jr. Mentor 2014)

Reading Partners Dallas (Tutor at MLK Learning Center 2013 - present)

Evergreen Life Services (Board of Directors 2010- present)

Presbyterian Communities and Services (Secretary 2008-09, Trustee 2008-12)

Presbyterian Village North (Chairman 2007-11, Trustee 2000-11)

Dallas Theater Center (Secretary and General Counsel 1987-89, Director 1982-89)

Dallas Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Acting President, 1985; Vice-President, 1982-86; Director, 1980-88) June 2014
FOR ACTION:

Re-election of PHS Board Member

The Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society recommends to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) that Jane Alexander Carl, William J. Marshall, and Cheryl Lynn Register be re-elected to serve on the Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society to a four-year term as part of the Class of 2019:

Carl, Jane Alexander (Pittsburgh, PA)

Position: Retired Executive Assistant to Executive Vice President of Communications and Public Advocacy, Media Information Assistant-American Heart Association National Center, Dallas, TX

Church Service: Current member, Aspinwall Presbyterian Church: Elder, Clerk of Session; Sunday School teacher; visitor follow-up and new member reception; Women’s circle Bible leader; Children’s committees.

Marshall, William J. (Lexington, KY)

Position: Emeritus Director, Special Collections and Archives, University of Kentucky Libraries.

Board Service: Kentucky Presbyterian Campus Ministry Board (past chair); Lexington Bach Society (chair); Lexington History Museum; Kentucky Chapter of the Society of American Baseball Research; The Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives; The Civil War Roundtable (secretary); and the Oral History section of The Society of American Archivists (past chair); teacher; consultant; published author.

Church Service: Current member of First Presbyterian Church, Lexington, Kentucky serving as elder, deacon, choir member, chair of mission team, served on personnel committee, Learning Center Board, and Nominating Committees for new Associate Pastor and Pastor positions.

Register, Cheryl Lynn (Minneapolis, MN)

Position: Writer, Teacher of creative non-fiction writing, public speaker, manuscript editor.

Board Service: Loft Literary Center; Steering Committee, Minnesota History Advocates; Education Committee, Loft Literary Center; selection panels for Artist Fellowships, Minnesota State Arts Board; Independent Scholar Award, Minnesota Humanities Commission; Children’s Literature Award, Hungry Mind Review;

Church Service: Current member of Westminster Presbyterian Church: Session; Chair, Associate Pastor Call Committee; National Task Force on Pornography, PCUSA.
For Action:

Assistant Stated Clerks

The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly recommends that the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) confirm the appointment of

1. Elect Laura Polk, Manager for Advocacy in the Office of Immigration Issues, to a four-year term as Assistant Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

   Laura comes to us with great PC(USA) experience as a young adult intern in Mission Service Recruitment, an intern in the Office of Public Witness, and a Young Adult Volunteer in Seattle teaching ESL to refugee women. She has lived in Ecuador and she brings a great deal of knowledge and experience in dealing with immigration issues and passion and commitment to justice. She is currently working as an ESL instructor in Virginia.

2. Re-elect Deb Davies, Laurie Griffith, Martha Miller, Teresa Waggener, Kris Valerius, Valerie Small and Molly Casteel to four-year terms as Assistant Stated Clerks of the General Assembly.

Rationale:

Assistant Stated Clerks are exemplary staff persons who may be asked by the Stated Clerk to give leadership to a GA Permanent Committee, task force or commission. These persons also represent the Office of the General Assembly as speakers, workshop leaders, at ecumenical gatherings, etc., as needed.

The above listed persons are faithful Christian leaders who serve the church with “energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.” The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is pleased to bring the above listed name for confirmation as Assistant Stated Clerks of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Standing Rules of the General Assembly at H.2.d. states the following:

   The Stated Clerk, after consultation with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, may appoint one or more Assistant Stated Clerk (see Standing Rule E.2.d.(4)). The term of appointment shall be four years, subject to reappointment by the Stated Clerk, after consultation with the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.
I have said this since my installation, but it cannot be said enough: serving as the vice moderator has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. While I knew the roles and responsibilities of this position, I could not have guessed its significance to so many. I’ve met women (young and old) who have shared their excitement to see me hold my son in my arms on the night of the election, those who have expressed enthusiasm for seeing a “young person” in denominational leadership, and continually crossing paths with those who have strong hope for the future of the PC(USA).

Fairmount Presbyterian Church celebrated the 100th anniversary of their women’s guild. Many of these groups are decreasing in numbers with less interest in the current structure from young women. In a children’s sermon during worship while sharing the stories of times when women were not in leadership and pushed into corners of the church’s work, a boisterous young boy said, “What! Why didn’t they go somewhere else that would let them be leaders? Why did they stay?!” A wonderfully honest question and yet here are so many of us as leaders, teachers, motivators, and dedicated workers in our churches. We have stayed the course, walked in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, and taken our own paths when we’ve seen fit to do so. What appeals to women today may not be what made these groups successful in the past, but the hard work and stories of women are certainly an important part of our denomination’s history.

Hope Presbyterian Church in Winter Haven, FL called their interim pastor in January 2014. Their youth group was struggling with only five teenagers that rarely met. But in less than a year, the congregation welcomed 52 members and grew the youth group to twenty-five teenagers. The teenagers are leading the way in evangelism by telling their high school friends about the church: whoever says that youth won’t talk openly about their faith haven’t met Hope’s group.

I share both of these stories (and I have so many more!) for two reasons. First, there are amazing accomplishments out there that often go unseen and unheard, many times because we burden ourselves with the latest fire to put out. Fires have to be extinguished, but they cannot draw our focus from the larger picture. A family/community needs support, care and love when the fire is put out. If we lose that perspective, then we miss our call to live in supportive community together. I’ve been wondering and struggling with how our denomination can truly live into the connectional community that we aspire to be. Technology offers us such great avenues to build relationships and network. I encourage us to find the best ways to harness these to equip, inspire, and empower one another.

Second, our history is so important. I have been involved in the national level of the church for a decade. In that [short] time, I’ve seen well-intentioned reports, task forces, and overtures that led to little action or left us spinning our wheels with the same conversations and action steps. This has been particularly true in regards to racial justice and reconciliation. The missteps with the OGHS/ Special Offerings materials by PMA are a lesson that we need to heed so that we can honestly explore the difference between who we say we are and how we engage in the world and/or even inside our own walls. We
should also ask ourselves where we have come from, uncovering the systems that we are perpetuating that don't allow us to be the best version of ourselves, and challenging ourselves to seek the best ways to nurture/uplift every part of the body.

I have committed myself to not only speaking as an ambassador for the 221st General Assembly's work, but also serving as someone who encourages us to think forward into the future. Who do we want to be? Who is God calling us to be? What is the best of our tradition that we need to maintain? What are the things (gulp!) that we might need to let go of to make room for other people, ideas, visions and dreams?

**Where In the World Has Larissa Been?!**

**Moderator's Conference**
Friday, November 7 - Sunday, November 9, 2014

**Celebration of 100 years of Women’s Guild in Cleveland Heights, OH**
Sunday, November 9, 2014 (Preaching and lead worship)

**Visit with the Presbyterian UN Office, NYC**
November 25, 2014

**Women Futuring Together, Stony Point Camp and Conference Center, NY**
December 1-5, 2014

**Youth Event and Preaching at Hope Presbyterian Church in Winter Haven, FL**
Wednesday, January 7 - Sunday, January 11, 2015

**New Harmony Presbytery Event**
Saturday, January 23, 2015

**Orientation for the Commission on the Status of Women, Presbyterian UN Office, NYC**
Wednesday, March 6, 2015
Background/Aim/Plan of the Foothills Overtures Working Group:

Background:

After many conversations by the Stated Clerk of Foothills Presbytery with other presbytery executives regarding potential reforms in the operations of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and after yet another traumatic post-GA experience by many of our pastors and congregations, a group of teaching and ruling elders from Foothills Presbytery convened to discuss a strategy for the healing and strengthening of our denomination.

Representing a diversity of views on a variety of issues facing the church — we are by no means all of the same perspective on the many social, political, and theological issues that challenge our denomination — we found ourselves remarkably agreed on one thing: the way we are conducting our common life, particularly around the matters of constitutional change and social witness, is deeply flawed. From the progressives to the conservatives among us, we agree that the PC(USA) must find a new way of ordering our denominational life if we are to salvage the integrity and vitality of our witness to Jesus Christ in the 21st century. What the world sees now, if it pays any attention at all to the internal life of our Presbyterian community, is a denomination muddled in confusion and conflict. Currently, across the spectrum of our views, we are ashamed of the way we Presbyterians are behaving ourselves — and we believe we ought to be. It is time to repent from shrill divisiveness and learn once again to speak and listen to one another in love.

However, grieved as we are about the common life of our denomination, we “do not grieve as those who have no hope!” Rather, we envision a day in our future when Presbyterians across the spectrum of theological, social, and political perspectives will point to the workings of our connectional system and say, with confidence, this is what it means to be a faithful Presbyterian church.

Inspired by this vision, a working group from Foothills Presbytery has written a series of overtures addressing a number of areas of our polity: (1) The purpose of GA and a proposed cycle for GA meetings; (2) The process by which the PC(USA) discerns its social witness and bears this witness to the world; (3) The scope and function of the constitution of the PC(USA)

Aim:

In an effort to live by our convictions about process and consensus building, we are now circulating our ideas, expressed in these overtures, among the presbyteries of the PC(USA).

We intend to

- Invite conversation about our ideas for reform
- Solicit feedback from our brothers and sisters across the denomination
- Determine which presbyteries, if any, might offer concurrence on any of these overtures, should they be approved by Foothills Presbytery for submission to the 222nd GA
- Be open to modification of our perspectives and plans based on this broader conversation
- Adopt and submit overtures for the reform of General Assembly that will lead to greater health in our common life and efficacy in our public witness

Plan:

1. Draft potential overtures for broad publication and consideration within the denomination.
2. Circulate our overtures, with attendant rationales, within the denomination by offering them for the consideration of the bills & overtures committees of every presbytery.
3. Receive feedback from other presbyteries. We expect some concurrence, some objection, and some suggestions for modification of the overtures.
4. After considering feedback from our conversation partners, prepare a final set of overtures to be submitted to the bills & overtures committee of Foothills Presbytery.
5. Seek adoption by Foothills Presbytery of a set of overtures for the reform of GA, and invite concurrence by other presbyteries.
Foothills Overtures for Reforming the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Church’s Social Witness in the 21st Century

The 2014 Montreat Leadership Conference was entitled “More Than None,” referring to the growing number of younger Americans who respond to surveys about religious preference by checking the option “None of the Above.” One of the keynoters was Gabe Lyons, co-author of UnChristian and The Next Christians, and cofounder of Catalyst, the nation’s largest gathering of young Christian leaders. Lyons writes,

...the next Christians realize that short-term political maneuvering cannot shape the long-term morals, beliefs, and attitudes of the greater culture... Solving the challenges of our day requires a different approach than we’ve seen modeled in recent years. Alongside the other characteristics I’ve described, civility grounds our approach and complements the way we live. It shapes our tone and seasons our rhetoric. This mentality moves conversations and engagement beyond the immediacy of winning the momentary battle to laying the groundwork for a better future.” (p. 179)

On a similar note, James Calvin Davis, Presbyterian teaching elder and Professor of Religion at Middlebury College in Vermont, speaks of the “habits of civil discourse that religious communities encourage” as “the real gifts they give to American public life.”

In many ways, those habits of civil conversation are more important than any consensus we might hope to achieve on heretofore divisive issues. [James] Gustafson was sure that promoting conversation, not necessarily agreement, was religious communities’ most important moral achievement. He argued that “participation in a serious moral dialogue moving toward consensus is more important than the consensus itself,” because “participation in moral discourse deepens, broadens, and extends [people’s] capacity to make responsible moral judgments” themselves. Striving for healthier, more respectful conversation will yield fruit, not just because it will move us toward mutual understanding and possibly substantial agreement, but because it will teach us how to think ethically, as individuals and as a society.

James Calvin Davis, In Defense of Civility, p. 168-69

Again, in concert with these other voices, The Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church, commissioned by the PC(USA) General Assembly, concluded its report to the 217th General Assembly (2006), saying,

The task force is convinced that the world is watching the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other denominations as we engage in highly publicized debates. To be one is not to say that we will be the same, that we will all agree, that there will be no conflict, but as the church listens to Jesus pray, all its members are reminded that the quality of our life together—our ability to make visible the unique relationship that is ours in Jesus Christ—is compelling testimony to the truth and power of the gospel we proclaim.

The Peace, Unity, and Purity Task Force recommended, among other things, that the 217th General Assembly
urge governing bodies, congregations, and other groups of Presbyterians to follow the example of the task force and other groups that, in the face of difficult issues, have engaged in *processes of intensive discernment through worship, community building, study, and collaborative work;* 

and

direct the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, and urge those who plan and moderate meetings of other governing bodies, *to explore the use of alternative forms of discernment preliminary to decision-making, especially in dealing with potentially divisive issues.*

It Is Not the 1960’s Anymore!

In conversations with members and officers of the Presbyterian Church (USA), when I suggest that our social witness should begin at the local level and be carried up to the General Assembly, I sometimes meet resistance from those who harken back to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. What if the national church had not spoken a decisive word, or failed to bear witness in a bold way, on issues such as race relations and women’s ordination? Acknowledging the great importance of the church’s witness in that era, my question to these friends is this: Do we really think we are operating in the same cultural context as our forbearers in the church? Even given the “question authority” mentality for which the 1960s is famous, a culture of allegiance persisted among members of mainline denominations in those days that does not exist today. Members, on the whole, identified with their denominations, still had a significant level of trust in institutions (at least, those who were still active in mainline denominations), and respected the authority of those institutions—at least, to a greater degree than is the case today. Current American culture is one of deep and pervasive distrust of institutions and their authority, of polarizing rhetoric that tends to dismiss or even demonize opponents (a tone that, sadly, is adopted by some elements in the church), and a highly consumerist approach to religious affiliation that undermines the old allegiances. We simply cannot continue to expect the institutional methods of the 1960s to be effective in building up the body of Christ today.

The Substance of GA Statements

We all want the statements of the Presbyterian General Assembly to mean something significant, but many of us are not convinced that our current process truly reflects the discernment of the broader church. We are particularly concerned with the process by which the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) brings action items to the GA agenda. While the process calls for the ACSWP to communicate “to the whole church...the manner in which the whole church can participate (advise, offer input, etc.) in its deliberations,” there is no mechanism in place to guarantee that due diligence is being exercised in ensuring broad deliberation. We believe a significant measure of deliberation and consensus-building should be required among the presbyteries before a social witness issue is dealt with at the GA level.

Bearing Witness and Doing Business

As members of Foothills Presbytery, we are fully aware that we are addressing the denomination from the state of South Carolina. We trust that historical caricatures of our region will not lead our brothers and sisters in Christ to jump to premature conclusions about our call
for reform. Our vision should not be mistaken as a warmed-over “doctrine of the spirituality of the church” such as that presented by James Henley Thornwell and others, a doctrine which we reject! We believe strongly that social, political, and economic issues are intrinsic to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are, therefore, calling for a more faithful process of bearing witness and doing business in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

We believe that a large part of our witness as a Christian body depends upon the manner in which we relate to one another. If we try to speak a prophetic word when we do not have our own house in order, our witness will be ineffective, at best, and may even undermine the Gospel we proclaim. In our culture of national politics and pervasive media coverage, we have become enamored with speaking loud words at the national level. We believe we are better able to discern our witness in conversations that grow organically at the local level. Would we not be better served by an ACSWP that utilizes our energies and resources generating intentional acts of discernment among the presbyteries of our denomination? Rather than appointing task forces that meet several times, removed from their communities, to discuss papers and write statements, we believe God is calling us to do the hard work of dialogue in real communities.

It is this dialogue at the local level that appears to be largely missing from our discernment process. We need leadership that is committed to getting Presbyterians of diverse perspectives to sit down together in real communities to discern God’s work of social justice in those particular places. It is our conviction that these conversations have to potential to generate a whole host of social policy statements that, while less publicized in national media, might make a more substantive impact in the long run on both the church and society?

The call of one of the Foothills Overtures is to eliminate the taking of “yes-no” votes on social justice issues at the General Assembly level. By this call for a moratorium, we do not mean to suggest that the church should keep silent at all levels about matters of social justice, economics, and politics. Rather, we need to reform a process that is currently falling to engage our congregations and presbyteries in the hard work of faithful conversations that seek to discern the mind and will of Christ in and for our particular contexts.

About the Constitution

Historically, constitutions have been stable, foundational documents. However, in current practice, despite the recent revision of our Form of Government, the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) still functions more as a manual of operations. As a result, our debates over constitutional amendments every other year leads to a loss of unity and stability as a denomination. We believe the constitution could be a clear, concise document that establishes our central identity as the Body of Christ, in biblical and confessional terms, while allowing each presbytery the freedom to discern and interpret the constitution for that presbytery’s context. In the same spirit as our convictions about discerning our public witness, we believe our constitutional process should be a more deliberative, consensus building process, that involves local conversations across the church, that come together periodically in a national convention. We would like to see this work of discernment and consensus so valued by our denomination that a 2/3 majority would be required to amend both parts of the constitution (as is now required to amend Part I: The Book of Confessions). To the end of unity and stability in the essentials, we envision a decennial constitutional convention.

In this spirit, and based on these convictions, we offer the attached Overtures to Foothills Presbytery, to be approved and sent on to the 218th General Assembly.
Overture Regarding Meetings of the General Assembly

Whereas the General Assembly exists to serve the individual churches which make up the PCUSA, and not the churches to serve the General Assembly;

Whereas the General Assembly “constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness” (G-3.30501);

Whereas the Six Great Ends of the Church are “the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world” (F-1.0304);

Whereas, in actual result, more recent General Assemblies have produced the opposite of a “bond of union, community, and mission” among its member congregations – but instead have produced strife, division, and dysfunction; and thereby greatly distracted PCUSA congregations from their central work of pursuing the Six Great Ends in their mission and ministry;

Whereas the central focus of recent General Assemblies has not been on “providing that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard . . . that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received . . . [and the nurture of the covenant community of disciples” (G-3.0501a-c), but rather has been centered upon the consideration of constitutional amendments – effectively turning the meetings of the General Assembly into biennial Constitutional Conventions;

And whereas a Constitution is not a manual of operations, but is a deeper document expressing shared and unifying principles and values which establish the general framework for governance, and therefore should not be easily amended without thoughtful consideration and widespread consensus regarding these fundamental principles and values;

Therefore, be it resolved that the General Assembly meetings of the PCUSA return to their rightful purpose of supporting and building up the congregations of our denomination as defined by the Book of Order – enabling them, individually and together in church councils, to more faithfully and effectively fulfill the Six Great Ends of the Church. Specifically, be it resolved that G-3.0503 of the Book of Order be amended as follows:

The General Assembly shall hold a stated meeting at least biennially. Each General Assembly shall be organized around one of the Six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304), taken up in succession in the order listed in F-1.0304. The main business of each General Assembly shall be to discuss and to explore ways to enable PCUSA congregations and councils to fulfill more faithfully and effectively that Great End which is the theme for each General Assembly. Every fifth General Assembly (i.e. every ten years) shall
depart from the rotation of the Six Great Ends and instead be called together as a Constitutional Convention to consider all amendments to the Constitution that have been properly submitted since the last decennial Constitutional Convention. All overtures to amend the Constitution, in order to be considered by the General Assembly, must have the endorsement of no fewer than one-third of the Presbyteries in the PCUSA. No overtures to amend the Constitution shall be considered at any General Assembly not designated as a Constitutional Convention, unless the overture has received the endorsement of two-thirds of the Presbyteries of the PCUSA. The moderator, or in the event ... [the rest of G-3.0503 continues unaltered from this point].
OVERTURE OF THE SESSION OF FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA ABOUT THE PROCESS OF ADDRESSING ISSUES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE, ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

Whereas, Jesus was born into and lived in the real world of politics, economics and social injustice;

Whereas, the ministry and life of Jesus demands that Christians engage not just in matters of the church and theology, but also in the real world by attempting to right wrongs and combat injustice;

Whereas, at times the church has not engaged in matters of social justice, economics and politics, and, in those situations, has perpetuated injustice in the world;

Whereas, Presbyterians are a diverse Christian denomination with a wide range of views on matters of social issues, economics and politics;

Whereas, Presbyterians favor open and respectful debate about matters of social justice, economics and politics and how the Christian faith impacts such issues;

Whereas, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA has taken positions as a denomination on a wide range of partisan issues on matters of social justice, economics and politics about which there is diversity of viewpoints among the denomination;

Whereas, taking yes or no positions on partisan issues has caused and continues to cause division within the denomination, loss of members, and distraction from the Gospel. Taking such yes/no votes also has and continues to cause many members to believe the denomination is sympathetic to the most liberal parts of the denomination and at odds with many Presbyterians with deeply held views to the contrary of such denomination positions;

Whereas, Fourth Presbyterian Church of Greenville, South Carolina, believes there is a better way to fulfill the church's obligation to engage in matters of social justice, economics and politics, but avoid at the national level taking unnecessary positions on controversial issues that have the adverse effects described above.

Now, therefore, the Session of Fourth Presbyterian Church of Greenville, South Carolina, adopts and moves that Foothills Presbytery adopt the following overture:

The Presbyterian Church, USA hereby reaffirms the importance of and supports engagement of Presbyterians in issues of social justice, economics and politics. Following the example of Jesus Christ, Christians should engage in matters of social justice, economics and politics, in addition to matters of the church and theology.

In carrying out this responsibility as a denomination, the Presbyterian Church, USA shall cease taking up or down, yes or no positions on partisan issues of social justice, economics and politics at the national level. Instead, the Presbyterian Church, USA, when such matters are properly before the General Assembly, shall call to the denomination's attention the importance of such issues, explain both sides of such issues and implore its members to learn about and pray about such issues and to become engaged in such issues according to one's conscience and views at the local church and presbytery level. The Presbyterian Church, USA shall also develop the schedule and agenda for the General Assembly so that the time allocated for education on such issues in committees, on the floor, and with all other aspects of the General Assembly is not disproportionate with the fact that social justice, economics and politics relate primarily to just one of the six great ends of the church.
Overture

Foothills Presbytery overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to temporarily set aside its Guideline and Policy for “Forming Social Policy” found in the appendix to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly. This section pertains to the role of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. Foothills Presbytery recommends the following to temporarily take its place:

For the next three General Assemblies (223, 224, and 225) the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) shall focus its attention on generating discussion in the presbyteries about any social witness policy concerns that arise. The aim of these discussions will be to work toward forming consensus in the broader Church regarding social witness.

For this time period, the ACSWP shall not on its own propose any Social Witness Policy to the General Assembly, synods or presbyteries, but shall allow any social witness policy proposals to arise from the presbyteries in the form of overtures.

For this time period, the ACSWP shall not serve its usual role as a clearing house or editor for all social witness policy proposals written by any other entity.

Rationale

The Social Witness Policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been decided at General Assembly by up or down votes, sometimes by narrow margins, without first generating a sense of the will of Christ from the broader Church. This form of decision making has often led to deep divisions in the Church. By spending time and effort at generating conversation and moving toward consensus, Social Witness Policy can be formed that better reflects the wisdom and discernment of the whole Church.

As much as possible, these conversations with presbyteries should be held through electronic means or regional meetings to minimize the expense. Any funds that would have been spent to bring ACSWP to its own committee meetings should be redirected toward the presbytery conversations.

In doing this, the ACSWP will be fulfilling the task force policy in section 3.c. of “Forming Social Policy” to develop a plan in which the whole church can participate in the formation of social witness policy.
**Overture**

Foothills Presbytery overtures the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to amend the Standing Rules of the General Assembly by striking certain words and *adding* others as follows:

Under the section B “Commissioners, Delegates and other Participants at the Meeting,” Subsection 2. “Advisory Delegates,” Paragraph b, “Categories”:

Categories b. There shall be five categories of advisory delegates: youth, theological student; missionary, ecumenical and executive presbyter. The expenses of each of the first four advisory delegates shall be paid by the General Assembly (see Standing Rule 1.3.) on the same basis as the expenses of commissioners (see Standing Rule B.2.f.(2) below for exception). *The expenses for the executive presbyter advisory delegate shall be paid by the presbytery on the same basis as expenses for commissioners.*

Add a Paragraph “h” under subsection 2 “Advisory Delegates” as follows

*Presbytery Advisory Delegates: Each presbytery may elect an Executive Presbytery Advisory Delegate (EPAD) who shall ordinarily be the presbytery executive (or person operating as the chief executive of the presbytery by any other title) to be an advisory delegate to the General Assembly.*

**Rationale**

Presbytery executives have a unique perspective, seeing intimately into the lives of congregations and closely into the life of the General Assembly at the same time.

This perspective gives them a view of the whole church in a way that few others have.

They care deeply about the life of the congregations and pastors they serve, and they care about the mission of the General Assembly as the whole Church ministers to the world.

The voice of presbytery executives has been systematically diminished for over thirty years because they have no say at General Assembly meetings unless they are elected a commissioner. This might happen only once in an executive’s career because of the method commissioners are chosen. This important voice is effectively minimized at the Assembly.

The voice of presbytery executives is very much needed at the Assembly to keep the whole church in perspective and to prevent the Assembly from seeming like an “other.”

Paragraph c would not be changed, so Executive Presbyter Advisory Delegates would have the same privileges as other advisory delegates. That is, they would serve on a committee with voice and vote and would have voice on the floor of the Assembly.

Presbyteries would cover the expenses of Executive Presbyter Advisory Delegates, so financial implications to the Assembly would not be a concern.
Overture to Require a 2/3s Majority of Presbyteries to Amend the Book of Order
(Revising G-6.04e)

Whereas, a constitution is a social document that asserts and affirms the core beliefs, values, principles and appropriate rules to express the identity of a given people;

Whereas, a constitution should therefore be a core social identity document and thus stable across long periods of the life of a social body;

Whereas, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church, USA recognizes and affirms this understanding regarding the creeds, catechisms and confessions in the Book of Confessions, and provides that any change in the creeds, catechisms and confessions require a process whereby the denomination only amends the Book of Confessions when there is approval by affirmative votes of two General Assemblies and two-thirds of the presbyteries (see G-6.03e);

Whereas the current rules for amending the Book of Order by a simple majority vote of one General Assembly and a simple majority of the presbyteries has led to loss of this understanding of a constitution;

Whereas the result of this aforementioned loss of understanding has led to a fundamental instability of the document, confusion regarding the difference between operational rules which by necessity are open to more frequent change and constitutional principles and rules which are enduring to an organizations identity, and has led to ongoing rounds of partisan attempts to claim the constitution as the document for one side over and against another;

Whereas in this era of sweeping social changes and a culture of partisan bickering, the aforementioned loss has furthered divisions in the Presbyterian Church, USA which has furthered mistrust, led to loss of support for our shared work and led to loss of membership;

Nevertheless, whereas the current Book of Order was only established by a majority vote;

Foothills Presbytery respectfully sends the following Overture to the 222nd General Assembly:

1. To amend G-6.04e by striking the following language:

e. The Stated Clerk receives written advice that a proposed amendment to the Book of Order has received the affirmative votes of a majority of the presbyteries. The proposed amendment so approved shall become effective one year following the adjournment of the assembly transmitting the proposed amendment.
And by replacing the stricken language with the words: *two-thirds majority*, and language from G-6.03e: *The proposed amendment is approved and enacted by the next General Assembly following the amendment’s receipt of the necessary two-thirds approval of the presbyteries.*

2. The thusly amended **Book of Order**, along with whatever other **Book of Order** amendments approved by the 222nd General Assembly will be sent out to the presbyteries for a two-thirds approval, and upon achieving that majority, the 223rd General Assembly shall vote to ratify this change.
Overture to
Provide an Alternative Voting Category for Governing Bodies

Whereas, the Church of Jesus Christ is called to work for peace, unity, and purity;

Whereas, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its member congregations are committed to reducing any factors that obscure Christian unity;

Whereas, our unity depends solely on Jesus Christ and not an unlikely if not impossible unanimity on the range of particular and partisan issues we encounter in society and culture:

Whereas, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continues to press votes on divisive issues which have disrupted the peace, unity, and purity of the Church and diminished membership and mission momentum;

Now, therefore, Foothills Presbytery adopts and moves the following overture:

The Book of Order, Chapter 3, “Councils of the Church,” be amended by adding to G-3.0105, point c: A presbytery may register as “Abstaining” when voting on General Assembly proposals recommending constitutional changes.

When abstaining on constitutional matters, a presbytery decision to abstain will not be recorded as a “no” vote. However, a majority of presbyteries will be required to vote “yes” for a constitutional amendment to pass.

A presbytery decision to register as abstaining may be accompanied by that presbytery’s rationale for abstaining. The abstaining presbytery, for instance, may abstain from conviction that a vote to change the constitution at that time is inadvisable, divisive, and that further prayer, discussion, and discernment will benefit the Church.
Foothills Presbytery Potential Overtures — Feedback Form

For each overture, please place an “X” on the scale representing the likelihood that your Presbytery would vote to concur with the overture. Also include any qualifying comments, or suggestions to improve the overture.

Return to: Rev. Gordon Raynal, Stated Clerk, Foothills Presbytery, 2242 Woodruff Road, Simpsonville, S.C. 29681

### Foothills Overture #1 - GA cycle; limiting constitutional change

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Comments/Suggestions:

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### Foothills Overture #2 - Eliminating Yes/No Votes on Controversial Political Issues

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Comments/Suggestions:
### Foothills Overture #3 - Altering the role of ACSWP

**Likelihood of Concurrence**

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**Comments/Suggestions:**

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### Foothills Overture #4 - Executive Presbyter Advisory Delegates

**Likelihood of Concurrence**

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**Comments/Suggestions:**

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### Foothills Overture #5 - Requiring a 2/3 majority to amend the constitution

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**Comments/Suggestions:**

### Foothills Overture #6 - Abstention as a category for Presbytery voting

**Likelihood of Concurrency**

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**Comments/Suggestions:**
Report - Task Force - Reference Checks between Presbyteries

On January 22, 2015, Susan Krummel, Director of Mid Council Relations and Barbara Gaddis, member of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly met with the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk and COM moderator of Middle Tennessee Presbytery at Donelson Presbyterian Church in Nashville, TN regarding the referral of a Commissioner’s Resolution from the 221st General Assembly (Detroit) to COGA. We also met with their commissioner to the last GA who brought the Commissioner’s Resolution.

The CR requested the GA to study the effectiveness of "mid council to mid council reference checks," especially in light of recent issues involving clergy references.

The CR came from a commissioner who had recently been involved in a situation in which her presbytery had admitted a Teaching Elder who had been under investigation in another presbytery for misconduct. The dismissing Presbytery had been delinquent in passing on this information in the various reference checks that had taken place. Specifically the Executive Presbyter to Executive Presbyter check had not yielded any red flags.

Subsequently, the Teaching Elder came under investigation in the new presbytery for misconduct, and the previous misconduct was uncovered inadvertently and the old presbytery stonewalled the investigation. The Teaching Elder renounced jurisdiction, halting all judicial action.

The Commissioner was surprised to learn that EP to EP reference conversations are not always candid, and that there are not clear ethical standards in place to prevent non-disclosing references from happening. The Commissioner further wanted a discussion of the issues surrounding reference checks at all levels of the church with an eye toward mid-governing body training for EPs as well as for COM and CPM chairs.

Several questions arose during our wide-ranging discussion.

• How can we quantify the problem?
• How can we lessen the likelihood of reference checks not being honest?
• What training do mid-governing officials undergo regarding reference checking? What about COM or CPM moderators?
• What are the consequences for “bad behavior” in regard to less-than-honest references?
• Can judicial action be taken against those who do not tell the complete truth?
• What liability is there when one presbytery does not disclose misconduct information to another receiving presbytery?
• Can we tweak the PIF to make it easier to live-link to previous employing agencies or churches?
FOR INFORMATION

- Can the language be broader in the legal document signed in the PIF to make it easier to prosecute offenders?
- Is sexual misconduct the only kind of misconduct about which they should self-disclose at the end of the PIF?
- Can COGA help to keep the conversation alive regarding ethical/clear standards with regard to reference checks?
- Can the church publish a list of those who renounce jurisdiction?
- Can the CLC website list those who are designated by their presbytery to give reference checks? (It is hard to know who the right person is to talk to and this list could save time in trying to figure out who the right person is.)

We left the meeting feeling those present felt they had been heard, and with the understanding that this issue will be difficult to solve, even difficult to address.
For Information

**Educator Certification**
The certification process for Christian educators is found in G-2.11 and detailed in the Educator Certification Handbook found online at [www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://www.pcusa.org/christianeducators).

In its 2013 and 2014 meetings, the Educator Certification Committee granted certificates to the following educators:

Certified Christian Educators in 2013:
- Kristi Button
- Melissa Coleman
- Tiffany Goggans
- Doug Hoffman
- Tai Magette
- Lillian Patricia Pastas
- Rachel Pedersen
- Roberta Schlechter

Certified Christian Educators in 2014:
- Kathy Gillmore
- Joanne Glaser
- Elizabeth Lovell Milford
- Brittany Porch
- Kevin Starcher
- Jenny Thagard
- Tami Voyles
- Karen Wagner

Christian Education Associate in 2014:
- Joanne Ahearn
Preface:

The purpose of this Manual is to set forth the membership, structure, responsibilities, and relationships of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA).

COGA is created by provision of the Book of Order, G-13.0103g and Standing Rules E.2, and specific responsibilities are provided in the Standing Rules of the General Assembly. It is authorized to carry out the assembly’s oversight of the Stated Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly; to assure the accountability of the Stated Clerk to the General Assembly during the interim between sessions of the assembly; and to provide linkage with the General Assembly Council.

The meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and its Coordinating Committee are held in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Order. As specified in G-9.0302, “…the most recent edition of Robert’s Rules of Order…” is used.

I. MAKEUP OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Membership. The General Assembly shall elect a Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (see Book of Order, G-13.0103g and SR E.2) composed of fourteen members; the fifteenth member is the Moderator of the General Assembly. All members of COGA are corresponding members of the General Assembly. The members of the committee shall serve a four-year term, and be eligible for election to one additional term. No member may serve more than two terms, full or partial.

The Moderator of the General Assembly shall serve as member of the committee with vote during his/her years of moderatorial service. The Vice Moderator of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council, and the vice chairperson of the General Assembly Council will serve as corresponding members of the committee with voice and no vote.

B. Leadership. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall elect its own officers and determine its structure, including any subcommittees (E.2.b). The COGA shall establish a work group on assembly arrangements to be composed of designated members from the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly, the Stated Clerk, the Moderator of the General Assembly, and the Executive Director of the General Assembly Council. The moderator of the Committee on Local Arrangements, and the moderator and vice-moderator of the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures (when selected) shall be nonvoting members of the committee at all meetings in which matters will be considered that affect their particular work. This work group shall be assigned responsibilities (8) through (17) in Standing Rule E.2.d.

C. Budget. The Committee shall be funded from the per capita apportionment and its financial activity shall be reported through a separate line in the General Assembly
Permanent and Special Committee Schedule. The proposed budgets of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall be submitted to the General Assembly (E.2.c).

D. Responsibilities: please see Standing Rules E.2.d. (1) – E.2.d. (18)

II. LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Officers of the Committee

1. There shall be a Moderator who shall preside at meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; review the Administrative Record, and be a member of and preside at meetings of the COGA Coordinating Committee; consult with the Stated Clerk on issues arising between meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; nominate to COGA committee members to serve where representation is needed and guide the committee in fulfilling its responsibilities. The Moderator shall be the representative of COGA to other assembly entities.

2. There shall be a Vice-Moderator who shall assume the duties of the moderator when called upon or when the chair becomes vacant; be a member of the COGA Coordinating Committee; review the Administrative Record and record the minutes of the executive sessions of the committee. Serve as a corresponding member of the General Assembly Council.

3. Ordinarily, the officers of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will serve for two years.

4. The officers shall begin to serve immediately upon the adjournment of the General Assembly and shall serve until the adjournment of the succeeding General Assembly.

5. Nominations: The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly nominating committee will present nominees for Moderator and Vice-Moderator on the first day of the winter meeting preceding each General Assembly. The election will be held on the final day of the winter meeting. Nominations from the floor will be in order.

6. Elections will be conducted in accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order.

B. COGA Coordinating Committee

1. The COGA Coordinating Committee shall normally be composed of five (5) committee members. The COGA moderator and vice-moderator, and a member of each class will serve on the coordinating committee (each class will elect a member to the committee). The COGA Moderator will name a fifth person to serve on the COGA Coordinating Committee.

2. The members of the coordinating committee shall be elected each year in which a General Assembly is held at the fall meeting and shall begin service immediately. Additional at-large members may be elected to fulfill the PC(USA)’s commitment to inclusiveness.
3. Responsibilities of the Coordinating Committee. Led by the COGA Moderator, a. it plans the agenda for meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; the COGA moderator in consultation with the coordinating committee will suggest to COGA how to organize its business on a meeting by meeting basis; b. ensures follow-up of actions taken by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; c. reviews and recommends revisions to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly Manual of Operations; d. approves the COGA report to the General Assembly; e. acts, when necessary, on behalf of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly between meetings, reporting all such actions to the next regular meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly; f. initiates the process of End of Term/Nomination review (see Appendix A); g. monitors and reviews the process of the election of the Stated Clerk (see Appendix B).

C. COGA Nominating Committee

1. The Nominating Committee, appointed by the COGA moderator, shall be composed of three persons from the outgoing class.

2. Responsibilities
   a. To identify potential new nominees for the COGA who complement the skills represented by current members;
   b. To submit to the General Assembly Nominating Committee the names of COGA members to be re-nominated to COGA;
   c. To present a slate of officers for election at the winter meeting preceding a General Assembly;
   d. To nominate a COGA member to serve as the COGA representative to the PHS Board’s Nominating Committee.

III. COGA ORGANIZES ITS WORK

Responsibilities: In its oversight of the work of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and the Office of the General Assembly, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall have the responsibility to:

A. Support and review the role of the Stated Clerk in administration and personnel issues.
   To fulfill this function COGA shall:
   1. Regularly consult and review with the Stated Clerk the work of each department within the Office of the General Assembly.
2. Regularly consults and reviews with the Stated Clerk policies and practices relative to his/her custody of official records and documents of the denomination.

3. Review the budget requests submitted by the Stated Clerk for that portion of the per capita budget administered by the Stated Clerk, and to forward the request to the Mission Support Services Office with the comments of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. Once the budget is adopted by the General Assembly, any changes to the budget must follow the most recent guidelines for amending the budget adopted by the General Assembly (1995 GA Minutes, p. 302). COGA regularly reviews budget reports at its stated meetings (Standing Rule E.2.3).

4. Review annually the work of the Stated Clerk and be responsible for an end-of-term evaluation or exit interview (See Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(d) and Appendix A of the COGA Manual).

5. Review and approve the proposed changes presented by the Stated Clerk to the staffing rationale, the compensation plan and personnel policies of the Office of the General Assembly (Standing Rule E.2.a).

6. Consult with the Stated Clerk regarding any proposals to the General Assembly concerning persons being recommended for election to the office of Associate Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and any persons being appointed to the office of Assistant Stated Clerk (Standing Rule G.5).

7. Consult with the Stated Clerk on all proposed amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly and that such consultation shall occur prior to the Stated Clerk proposing any amendments to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly (Standing Rule B.3.a).

B. Oversee all arrangements for each meeting of the General Assembly in partnership with the Stated Clerk and the staff of the Office of the General Assembly. To fulfill this responsibility, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall:

1. Receive regular reports from the staff of the Office of the General Assembly regarding planning, budget, administration, program, structure and constitutional issues related to the meetings of the General Assembly; to meet with representatives of the Committee on Local Arrangements as required and receive reports from them (Standing Rule E.2.e).

2. Outline the programs for future General Assemblies sufficiently in advance to ensure an orderly progression of themes and emphases and to ensure the appointment of significant speakers and other program participants (Standing Rule E.2.d.(9)).

3. Review the work of special committees and report to each session of the General Assembly a summary of the work being carried out by special committees, including recommendations to transfer the work assigned to a special committee elsewhere or to dismiss the committee (Standing Rules B.8.b and E.9.a).
4. Review the evaluation of each General Assembly session presented by the Stated Clerk; review referrals to the General Assembly Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (Standing Rule E.2.d.(8)).

5. Review and present to the Assembly Committee on Bills and Overtures a recommendation regarding the Stated Clerk’s proposed docket for the next session of the General Assembly (Standing Rules B.1 and E.2.d.(10)).

6. Review and present to the Assembly Committee on Business Referrals a recommendation regarding the Stated Clerk’s proposed referral of each item of business to an appropriate assembly committee (Standing Rules B.6 and E.2.d.(11)).

7. Coordinate the programmatic aspects of each General Assembly session, ensuring that adequate time is provided for the business that must be transacted (Standing Rule E.2.d.(14)).

8. Prepare a report from COGA, including recommendations on the docket and the referral of assembly business, to be distributed with other materials provided to commissioners (Standing Rule E.2.d.(16)).

9. Reviews and consults with the Stated Clerk on appeals regarding the preparation and distribution of the business of the General Assembly (Standing Rule B.5.b).

10. Reviews and consults with the Stated Clerk on policies, meetings, briefings, hearings, or other events of any kind during those hours when the General Assembly is in session (Standing Rule E.2.d.(15)).

11. Review the recommendations of the Stated Clerk and set the amount of per diem for sessions of the General Assembly (Standing Rule D.4).

12. Review and present to the General Assembly for its action the date and place of future GA meetings and any changes in dates and places of meetings previously set (Standing Rule D.1.a).

C. Support the leadership of the Moderator and Vice-Moderator of the General Assembly. As it works in partnership with these officers, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall:

1. Encourage the ministries of the Moderator and Vice Moderator as each itinerates on behalf of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In exercise of pastoral concern for the Moderator and Vice-Moderator to consult with them concerning their stewardship of time, their sabbatic rest, and the expectations of the Standing Rules (Standing Rule F.4.a).

2. Receive the written report of the Moderator of the General Assembly (Standing Rule F.6).

3. Consult with the Moderator’s plans regarding the planning of worship at the General Assembly (Standing Rule D.3.a).
4. Through the Coordinating Committee assists the Moderator regarding the appointment of a commissioner to be the moderator of each assembly committee and a commissioner to serve as vice-moderator of each assembly committee (Standing Rule C.3.a.(1)).

D. COGA meets annually with the Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, and when possible with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, to discuss items of mutual concern and interest and in order to foster coordination, communication, education and community-building between the two entities (Standing Rule E.2.d.(5)).

E. COGA elects one representative to serve on the PHS Nominating Committee. The COGA representative shall serve ex officio (Covenant of Understanding between COGA and PHS, Item #9).

IV REPORTS WHICH COME TO THE COMMITTEE

A. The Stated Clerk shall report at each meeting as to the status of the work and mission of the Office of the General Assembly, including any current or pending actions or activities of which the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly members need to be aware (Standing Rule E.2.1).

B. COGA will receive reports on the Per Capita budget at each meeting (Standing Rule 2.d.3).

C. COGA will at least annually receive a report from the Board of the Presbyterian Historical Society (Covenant of Understanding between COGA and PHS Board, Item #10).

D. The Committee shall receive a written report from the Moderator and the Vice Moderator of the General Assembly at each meeting of the COGA (Standing Rule F.6).

V. COGA MEETINGS AND THEIR CONTENT

A. Frequency of meeting: In addition to meeting at a stated meeting of the General Assembly, COGA shall meet two (2) times a year in accordance with a schedule that is established by its membership.

B. Location of Meetings/Meeting Dates:

1. All meeting dates shall be set, taking into consideration meeting dates of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the schedule of the Moderator of the General Assembly.

2. For financial considerations, to the extent practicable, the meetings shall normally be in Louisville, Kentucky, with the exception of the meeting that takes place at the Assembly site.

3. Other locations may be used as deemed necessary to facilitate the work of the committee.
4. Telephone or electronic conferencing may be used to replace or augment meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

| C. The Fall meeting following a stated meeting of the General Assembly shall be organizational and instructional in nature, to include:

1. orientation of any new COGA members to COGA and OGA;
2. review of referrals from the General Assembly to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly;
3. review evaluations of General Assembly session;
4. review of preliminary GA docket;
5. review and approval of GA per Diem;
6. review of OGA budget and approval of revised budget; review and approval of changes in OGA’s staffing rationale and OGA’s Personnel Policies;
7. review and approval of standing rule amendments;
8. annual review of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly (see Appendix A);
9. such other matters as may come before the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

| D. Other meetings shall include in their agendas the following items of business, at such times as best support the effective functioning of the General Assembly:

1. review and approval of GA docket; review of requests from entities for docket time at GA; review of requests from entities to schedule meetings during GA; review of referrals of assembly business to committees;
2. review and approval of the COGA report to the General Assembly;
3. overview and approval of Joint Per Capita budget;
4. overview and approval of OGA’s budget;
5. meeting with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board’s Executive Committee;
6. overview and approval of GA referrals;
7. evaluation of OGA’s current goals, and review and approval of annual strategic planning for the Office of the General Assembly;
8. overview and approval of standing rule amendments;
9. conversations with staff of the Committee on Local Arrangements and the GA Moderator regarding programmatic aspects of the GA;

10. overview and approval of GA logos and themes as presented by the COLA;

11. review an approval of future assembly sites;

12. review and approval of GA Committee Leadership;

13. review the work, and approve the report of special committees;

14. electing the committee’s moderator and vice-moderator, whose terms shall begin at the adjournment of the General Assembly;

15. review and recommend revisions to the COGA Manual of Operations;

16. such other matters as may be necessary and/or appropriate.

D. In the year in which a stated meeting of the General Assembly is held the Committee shall meet during the Assembly at the discretion of the Coordinating Committee to:

1. review and offer comments on Commissioners’ Resolutions as appropriate;

2. address any last minute items related to the Assembly;

3. handle such other matters as may be necessary and/or appropriate.

VI. PARTICIPATION OF COGA MEMBERS AT THE ASSEMBLY

A. Ordinarily, all members of the Committee of the Office of the General Assembly attend the biennial General Assembly. Not only does this attendance make possible an opportunity for on-site observation and training in the ways of the General Assembly, it also provides a means for utilizing committee members as facilitators, enablers, resource persons, and the like.

B. All members are corresponding members of the General Assembly. One member, ordinarily the moderator, will report to the General Assembly on behalf of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.

C. Other committee members may be used in lieu of other volunteers so that financial implications will be minimal if not neutral.

VII. RELATIONSHIPS

A. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board shall meet together biannually.
B. The Presbyterian Mission Agency Executive Director will be an ex officio member of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly without vote (see Standing Rule E.2.a).

C. Clarifying the Role of Committee and Role of Staff

1. All policies and procedures for the Office of the Stated Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly are governed by the Standing Rules of the General Assembly and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

2. The style of operations of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly in its work with the Stated Clerk and the staff of the Office of the General Assembly shall be a consultative relationship. The specific duties and responsibilities of the committee and staff should be developed jointly within an attitude of trust where authority, accountability, goals, and objectives are clearly defined.

D. Stated Clerk: The Stated Clerk shall be an ex officio member of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and its Coordinating Committee without vote.

E. Department Directors: The department directors will participate regularly in meetings of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly with voice but without vote.

F. Committee on Ecumenical Relations (CER): The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall have a liaison on the Committee on Ecumenical Relations.

G. Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Historical Society: The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall have a liaison on the Board of Directors of the Presbyterian Historical Society.

H. Joint Committee on the Office of the General Assembly/Presbyterian Mission Agency Board [Per Capita] Budget Table. When needed, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly shall appoint three (3) of its members to the Joint COGA/GAC [Per Capita] Budget Table, one of which shall be designated co-convener by the COGA moderator.
APPENDIX A: PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

A. Stated Clerk:

There will be two forms of assessment of the Stated Clerk’s work: (1) an annual review and (2) an end-of-term evaluation.

1. Annual Review

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will annually review the work of the Stated Clerk (Standing Rule E.1.d.(2)).

The annual review will be based on work objectives developed by the Stated Clerk and approved by the committee.

At the fall meeting, the committee will meet with the Stated Clerk to review work performance for the past year, and in light of the review to consider work objectives for the year ahead.

Result of the annual review shall be given to the Stated Clerk in writing.

2. End-of-Term Evaluation

The Stated Clerk Nomination Committee will be responsible for conducting an end-of-term evaluation (see Standing Rule G.1.C.(1)(d)).

The end-of-term evaluation must include a recommendation whether the Stated Clerk should be considered for reelection.

B. Review of Other Staff:

The Stated Clerk shall be responsible for ensuring that the review and evaluation of all other staff is done on a regular basis. The result of the review of department directors shall be reported to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.
I. The process of electing a Stated Clerk (delineated in Standing Rule G.1.c.) outlines four responsibilities for the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA). They are as follows:

A. Nominate three persons to serve on the Stated Clerk Nomination Committee, one of whom shall serve as the moderator of the committee (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(a)).

B. Provide the nomination committee with a current position description for the position of Stated Clerk (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(e)).

C. Ensure that an adequate budget for the nomination process is provided in the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(f)).

D. Designate staff services for the nomination committee and, as necessary, (Standing Rule G.1.c.(1)(f) and G.1.c.(2)(d)(ii)).

II. PROCESS

A. One year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk at the COGA winter meeting, the Coordinating Committee shall meet to develop a slate of three (3) nominees to serve on the Stated Clerk Nomination Committee (naming one as the moderator); and in developing the slate, the COGA Coordinating Committee, will consider the talents and skills needed for this responsibility, including knowledge and scope of OGA operations, inclusiveness, expertise/experience in personnel matters, and familiarity with the position description of the Stated Clerk. The COGA moderator will propose this slate of nominees to COGA for confirmation at its winter meeting, one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk; and, this list of nominees will then be forwarded to the General Assembly Nominating Committee.

B. The COGA Coordinating Committee will present to COGA any proposals for amending the position description for the Stated Clerk no later than its spring meeting, one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk, and this updated description will be forwarded to the nomination committee immediately following the adjournment of the General Assembly.

C. The COGA Coordinating Committee will consider any budget implications of these proposals and report such implications to the COGA winter meeting one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk.

D. Staff Services
   1) Staff services for the nomination committee and, if necessary, the Candidate Review Committee will be provided by someone from outside the staff of General Assembly entities; and, that COGA search for a person in the church who is knowledgeable about OGA operations; and
   2) the Coordinating Committee will present to COGA for adoption at its winter meeting (one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk) a position description for the
person who is to provide staff services to the nomination committee and, if necessary, the Candidate Review Committee; and

3) The Coordinating Committee will propose, in consultation with the chair of the Search Committee, to COGA at its spring meeting (one year prior to the election of the Stated Clerk) for confirmation a name of a person to serve as staff to the nomination committee and, if necessary, the Candidate Review Committee; and

E. The moderator, vice-moderator, and staff person, will be included in the General Assembly Leadership Briefing to be held on the date scheduled in the year of the election of the Stated Clerk as preparation for the prospect of providing leadership for the Candidate Review Committee.
Appendix C:

OPEN MEETING POLICY*
Approved by the 209th General Assembly (1997)

1. The work of the church is strengthened when it is done in a spirit of openness and trust. Church members have a basic right to know about the work done and the decisions made by entities within the church. Church leaders have a basic responsibility to honor that right by conducting their business with a spirit of openness and vulnerability to public scrutiny. Therefore, open meetings shall be the norm for all such entities.

2. It is the policy of the General Assembly; the General Assembly Council, its Ministries Divisions and [Mission Support Services], and of the entities and work groups related to them, that their meetings shall be open to all interested persons.

3. In certain circumstances, when the confidentiality of the subject matter is impeding the open work of the group, meetings of these entities may be closed. The following requirements apply:
   a. Subjects dealt with must be limited to property negotiation, personnel, civil and criminal litigation, or security.
   b. Closed meetings may be authorized only after serious consideration and by a majority vote of the members present. Such closure must be limited in time and scope to matters in 3(a) above.
   c. In closed meetings, only voting members and other persons invited by the group to serve it are to be present.
   d. The reason(s) for closing must be announced before closure and also must be recorded in the minutes.
   e. The decisions reached shall be recorded in the minutes, and shall be made public as soon as possible following the end of the closed meeting.

4. Since staff groups have neither authority nor responsibility for establishing policy, their meetings are not subject to these provisions. This does not preclude them from opening their meetings.

5. The provisions of this policy shall apply to visitors and to representatives of both church and public media, including print, electronic, and photographic journalists.

6. All the provisions of this policy are to be applied equitably to all persons and groups.

7. The Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is responsible for resolving questions relating to the application and interpretation of the open meeting policy.

*The 215th General Assembly (2003) approved the following statement in regards to the Open Meeting Policy:

The General Assembly Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the PC(USA) shall be exempt from this open meeting policy in order to go into closed session solely for the purpose of exchanging views on sensitive theological issues in cases where it is determined by two-third's vote of the members of the task force present in a duly called and constituted meeting. (Minutes, 2003, Part I, p. 23)
The information below is an excerpt from the PMA Board’s Manual on the role of the PMA Audit Committee.

From our Manual, here’s the details on what the Audit Committee does...

Audit Committee:

(a) Purpose:
The primary function of the Audit Committee is to assist the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities and duties as follows:

1. Monitor the integrity of the financial reporting process and system of Internal Control regarding finance, accounting, legal compliance and ethics that have been established.
2. Monitor the independence and performance of the Corporation’s external auditors, internal auditing unit and management.
3. Provide an avenue of communication among the external auditor, internal auditing unit, management and the Board.

The Committee has the authority to conduct any investigation appropriate to fulfilling its responsibilities, and in this regard, it has direct access to the external auditors as well as anyone in the organization.

(b) Composition and Membership:
The Committee is composed of six (6) voting members:

1. Three (3) are Board voting members.
2. One (1) member is appointed by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA).
3. Two (2) are at-large members nominated by the General Assembly Nominating Committee (GANC) for special expertise and elected by the General Assembly.

Each member of the Committee shall be independent and may not accept directly or indirectly any consulting, advisory, or other compensatory fee from either the Presbyterian Mission Agency or Office of the General Assembly (OGA). All members of the Committee shall have a working familiarity with basic finance and accounting practices and the two at-large members of the Committee shall have accounting or related financial management expertise determined by the Finance Committee and the Audit Committee Chairs.

The Committee will meet in conjunction with the scheduled Board meetings or more frequently as circumstances may require. The Committee meets annually, usually in April, to review the audited financial statements. Also, if the Committee Chair is not present, the members of the Committee may designate a Chair by majority vote. (50% of the members shall constitute a quorum).

The Committee may ask members of management or others to attend the meetings and provide pertinent information as necessary. The Committee shall meet periodically with management, the external auditors and Internal Audit in separate executive sessions.

(c) Duties and Responsibilities

The Committee is to assist the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities by reviewing and reporting on:
(1') The system of internal controls over financial reporting,
(2') The integrity of the financial statements,
(3') Processes to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and
(4') Ethics Policy violation reports.

The Committee will provide input regarding the Internal Audit function. This input may include the qualifications, independence, performance and compensation of the Internal Audit staff.

The Committee will pre-approve all auditing services and be directly responsible for the appointment, compensation, retention, dismissal and oversight of the work of any external auditing firm engaged. The Committee will resolve any disagreements between management and the auditor regarding financial reporting.

The Committee shall be provided appropriate funding for payment of compensation to the external auditors and ordinary administrative expenses of the Committee. The Committee will carry out the following specific duties and responsibilities:

(1') Internal Control
(a') Review with management, internal auditors and external auditors the adequacy and effectiveness of policies for assessing and managing risk.
(b') Examine any findings of weaknesses and recommendations for the improvement of the internal controls. Monitor management’s response to and implementation of internal control recommendations.
(c') Review with management, internal auditors and external auditors the adequacy of computerized systems controls, the security of such, and the contingency plan for processing financial information in the event of a system breakdown.

(2') Financial Reporting
Review with management, the internal auditors and the external auditors:

(a') The interim and year-end financial statements and related footnotes considering their completeness, consistency, and reflection of appropriate accounting principles.
(b') The external auditors’ audit of the financial statements and their report thereon.
(c') Any significant changes in accounting principles, significant judgment areas and significant or complex transactions (including any off-balance sheet structures) that occurred and the external auditors’ judgments about the quality, not just the acceptability, of the accounting principles as applied in financial reporting.
(d') Management’s handling of proposed audit adjustments identified by the external auditors.
(e') Any significant changes required in the external auditors audit plan.
(f') All written communications between the external auditors and management, such as any management letters or schedule of unadjusted differences.
(g') Any serious difficulties or disputes between management and the external auditors.
(h') All matters required to be communicated to the Committee under generally accepted auditing standards (SAS-61).

(3') External Auditors
(a') Serve as the authority to which the external auditors report.
(b') Appoint the external auditors to be engaged, establish the audit fees of the external auditors, and pre-approve any non-audit services provided by the external auditors.
(c') Review the latest internal quality-control or peer review of the external auditors’ firm, any material issues raised, and the steps taken to resolve such.
(d') Review, at least annually, all relationships between external auditors and Presbyterian Mission Agency Board /Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and otherwise assess the independence of the external auditors and the turnover rates of the lead and concurring partners.
(e') Review and evaluate the performance of the external auditors and review with the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board any proposed replacement of the external auditors.

(4') Internal Auditors
(a') Review the objectivity, effectiveness, budget and staffing of the Internal Audit Department.
(b') Receive information from the Presbyterian Mission Agency Executive Director regarding the appointment, replacement, reassignment or dismissal of the Associate Director of Internal Audit.
(c') Review the Internal Audit Plan for the current year, the risk assessment procedures used to identify projects included in the plan and any changes required in its scope.
(d') Review the Internal Audit Policy and compliance with the Institute of Internal Auditors’ (IIA) Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.
(e') Review with management and the internal auditors:
(i) Significant findings on internal audits during the year and management’s responses thereto.
(ii) Any difficulties the internal auditors have encountered in the course of their audits, including any restrictions on the scope of their work or access to required information.
(iii) Any changes required in the scope of their internal audits.

(5') Ethics Policy Violation Reports
(a') The Audit Committee has duties under the “Ethics Policy for COGA and Presbyterian Mission Agency Board Members.” It also has duties under the “Ethics Policy for Presbyterian Mission Agency and Office of the General Assembly Employees”. These policies are attached as Appendix 6.
(b') The Audit Committee will fulfill its duties as set out in those Ethics Policies.

(6') General:
(a') Review the Committee’s charter annually, reassess the adequacy of this charter, consider any new laws or regulations, and recommend any proposed changes to the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board.
(b') Ensure that the Ethics Policies are formalized in writing, adequate and up-to-date. Review with legal counsel and the Associate Director of Internal Audit the processes for communicating the importance of the Ethics Policies, monitoring compliance therewith and any changes to or waivers of the Ethics Policies.

(c') Request the external auditors provide information on any legal and regulatory matters that may have an internal impact on the financial statements and the related compliance policies and procedures.

(d') Institute and oversee special investigations as needed.

(e') Perform other activities related to this charter as requested by the Board.

(f') Confirm annually that all responsibilities outlined in this charter have been carried out.

(g') Evaluate the performance of the Committee and its individual members on a regular basis.
# Proposed Meeting Schedule

**Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>2015 Meeting Dates:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Location:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 9-11, 2015</td>
<td>Louisville, KY – approved by COGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 26-28, 2015</td>
<td>Louisville, KY - Joint Meeting with PHS</td>
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<td><em>There are no hotels in the Louisville area with availability due to the FFA Convention taking place at the same time.</em></td>
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**Options:**

- *Keep meeting in Louisville at the same date and look into the Louisville Seminary or Retreat Center*
- *Consider other date range*
- *Consider meeting location change to another city outside of the Louisville area (Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Philadelphia?, other option)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>2016 Meeting Dates:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Location:</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 3-5, 2016</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 3 - COGA meets with PMA Board Exec. Comm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 4-5, COGA Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 19, 2016</td>
<td><strong>120-Day Deadline</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>222nd General Assembly</strong></td>
<td><strong>June 18-25, 2016 – Portland Oregon</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 3-5, 2016</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
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</table>
Wednesday March 18, 2015
The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) Coordinating Committee was convened via conference call at 9:15 a.m. by COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott.

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

COGA Coordinating Committee Members:
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Leah Johnson
Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio

Excused:
Barbara Gaddis

OGA Staff:
Angie Stevens

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly Coordinating Committee heard from Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Gradye Parsons, regarding the need of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) to outsource its information technology support software programming maintenance in order to save funds.

The OGA has approximately one dozen custom software and online programs that have been created for specialized ministry area needs within the OGA. Maintenance of these programs has been provided by the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s (PMA) Information Technology, part of PMA’s shared services for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corp. The OGA incurs an annual cost of $250,000 for this support.

Research conducted by OGA’s Communications team has determined that outsourcing information technology and program management support to an outside vendor would reduce the cost of these services to $100,000 annually, as proposed in a bid submitted to the OGA by a vendor in Lexington, Kentucky.

OGA’s Leadership Team will be meeting on Thursday March 19, 2015 to discuss this proposal.

This is a business decision about how to best serve the church with the resources that we have. PMA’s Information Technology team has been cooperative with this decision and OGA has received permission to gain
possession of all of its specialized programs, except for the online registration program, an Internet application used by all agencies of PC (U.S.A.) to facilitate registration for national and regional events and conferences, including the biennial General Assembly. The OGA provided 90% of the funding for the creation and implementation of this program.

The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly is requesting the COGA Coordinating Committee request a copy of the registration program software from PCUSA A Corp. and the accompanying licensure to use and modify the program to fit the need of the OGA.

As the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corp owns the rights to the online registration program, PC (U.S.A.)’s General Council, Martha Clark, recommended that the request for the release of the program be presented to the COGA Coordinating Committee for approval. The verbiage in the agreed release will include language to retain the right to use and modify the program.

Jim Wilson moved that the COGA Coordinating Committee vote on COGA Coordinating Committee requests a copy of the registration program software from PCUSA A Corp. and the accompanying licensure to use and modify the program to fit the need of the OGA

With the motion seconded the COGA Coordinating Committee -

**VOTED to APPROVE** to request a copy of the registration program software from PCUSA A Corp. and the accompanying licensure to use and modify the program to fit the need of the OGA.

Having no further business, the COGA Coordinating Committee conference call adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
MINUTES
COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
CONFERENCE CALL
May 12, 2015

Tuesday May 12, 2015
The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) Coordinating Committee was convened with prayer via conference call at 5:00 p.m. by COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott.

WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

The following persons present for all or part of the conference call were:

COGA Coordinating Committee Members:
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Leah Johnson
Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
Barbara Gaddis

Excused:
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio

OGA Staff:
Angie Stevens
David Crittenden

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly Coordinating Committee heard from David Crittenden, Interim Director of Ecclesial Ministries, who reviewed the proposed position description for Manager of Administration for the Office of the General Assembly (Attachment 1).

Background information: David was hired to review the role, which included a role in human resources, finance and staff to COGA. The language in the new job description is stronger in the development and maintenance of all OGA policies.

The Directors of OGA felt that the position could be different. Gradye Parsons and Tom Hay discussed Tom Hay assuming the role of staff to COGA, as it coincides with his role in the General Assembly.

This would no longer be an Associate Stated Clerk position and would be an Assistant Stated Clerk position. The new manager would join the OGA Leadership Team when needed, but would not be a permanent part of the OGA Leadership Team.

John Wood and Takiyah Cuyler are now taking on the financial function of OGA, which was formerly supervised by the Director of Ecclesial Ministries. The new role of Manager of Administration would help coordinate financial management and budget development. However, it will not be managing the finances. This role WILL help determine ways
to assess funding needs and Per Capita. David is working with John Wood and Takiyah Culyer, who are both staff members of the Presbyterian Historical Society, for OGA. They will work to get more accurate reports to effectively assist OGA staff in managing their budgets.

Concerns about gaps: The relationship that Loyda had with HR will be continued with the new Manager of Administration

Other concerns or comments -

The job would be posted internally and externally.

The intention is not to fill the position that Christopher Nicholas held. John Wood and Takiyah Cuyler will take on his former role at General Assembly. This new process will be reviewed annually to make sure that this new alignment is functioning well.

Target hiring date is July 11th, 2015. Upon approval by the COGA Coordinating Committee, the position will be posted and an interviewing team will be selected.

With the motion seconded the COGA Coordinating Committee -

VOTED to APPROVE the proposed job description as submitted to the COGA Coordinating Committee.

Having no further business, the COGA Coordinating Committee conference call adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title:  Manager of Administration for the Office of the General Assembly
Grade: 18
Entity:  Office of the General Assembly    Exempt Status: E
Department:  Ecclesial and Ecumenical Ministries

PURPOSE OF THE POSITION:  To provide administrative leadership within the Office of the General Assembly in the areas of human resources, financial management and policy.

REPORTS TO:  The Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

SUPERVISES:  Senior Administrative Assistant - Human Resources
Program Assistant Moderatorial Services

BUDGET ACCOUNTABILITY:  Personnel Budget

LIST UP TO TEN (10) DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:  (in order of importance) of the position include, but are not limited to:

1. Coordinates all human resources functions of the Office of the General Assembly in collaboration with the Human Resource Office of the Presbyterian Mission Agency and PC(USA) General Counsel as necessary.
2. Maintains all policies of the Office of the General Assembly
3. Coordinates the financial management of the Office of the General Assembly including but not limited to: budget development, funds development and internal and external reports
4. Travel to the site of the biennial meeting of the General Assembly as assigned.
5. Other duties as assigned.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:
Education:  Undergraduate and/or graduate degree in business administration, management, human resources, and/or theology OR its equivalent however it was acquired.
Experience, Knowledge and Skills: Significant administrative leadership with experience in office operations; budget development; personnel administration; problem solving; team building and interpersonal relations.

Sensory or Physical Requirements: Physical/emotional stamina/sense of humor essential; ability to travel to out of town meetings

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS:
Knowledge of: Extensive knowledge of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in particular the role and function of the agencies of the General Assembly and their relationship to mid-councils.

We have reviewed this position description and believe it to be accurate.

______________________________________  ______________________________________
Employee’s signature      Date          Supervisor’s signature     Date

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) retains the discretion to add or change the function, responsibilities, and/or minimum qualifications for this position at any time.
Thursday May 21, 2015
The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) Coordinating Committee was convened via conference call at 10:00 a.m. by COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott. Jim Wilson opened the meeting with prayer.

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

COGA Coordinating Committee Members:
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Ginny Rainey
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio
Larissa Kwong Abazia
Leon Lovell-Martin
Kathy Matsushima
Heath Rada
Wilson Kennedy
Leah Johnson
Eileen Lindner
Leemuel Garcia-Arroyo
Vince Thomas

Excused:
Marcia Mount Shoop
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Linda Valentine
Josephene Stewart
Barbara Gaddis
Carol McDonald

OGA Staff:
Angie Stevens
Tom Hay
David Crittenden

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Gradye Parsons, who provided an overview of the recent motion presented at the recent Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) Board Meeting.

The motion opened the conversation for PMA and OGA to merge. There is concern about how this gets initiated and whether it would have consequences of how this will turn out.
Jim Wilson suggested that a COGA Working group be assembled to begin discussion on a proactive approach to the matter. The working group will review the structure and function of the Church and look at what the church could be.

If there are going to be overtures about this at the next assembly, the goal is to have a process proposed in comments with what COGA put together.

Jim Wilson proposed a short-term meeting within the next 6-weeks to 2 months to come up with a more concrete proposal of how to move forward with respect to the merger discussion.

Tom Hay will share a reference on the structure of the agencies, which provides definition of their roles.

Margaret Elliott requested that COGA members who want to take part in the committee send an email to her. With COGA’s approval, she will discern who will be in the working group, which would be comprised of 3-5 people.

With a motion on the floor, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott to determine the COGA members to participate in this working group from those who have expressed an interest.

The next COGA meeting will take place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which includes joint sessions with the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS). A planning team will put together agenda for the joint sessions, which will comprised of COGA members and PHS Board members and staff. Virginia Rainey and Leah Johnson have offered their availability to participate. Jim Wilson suggested that he or Vince Thomas should participate as they worked on the agreement between COGA and PHS.

Having no further business, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly conference call adjourned at 10:46 a.m. with Eileen Lindner leading the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
Thursday July 22, 2015
The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) was convened via conference call at 12:00 noon by COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott. Gradye Parsons opened the meeting with prayer.

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

COGA Members:
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Ginny Rainey
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio
Barbara Gaddis
Carol McDonald
Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
Heath Rada
Leah Johnson
Larissa Kwong Abazia
Eileen Lindner
Kathy Matsushima
Vince Thomas

Excused:
Wilson Kennedy
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Leon Lovell-Martin
Marcia Mount Shoop

OGA Staff:
Angie Stevens
Tom Hay

Gradye Parsons provided an update on the search for the Manager of Administration in the Office of the General Assembly (OGA). Interviews will begin on the week after Big Tent, on August 15 and 16, 2015.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tom Hay, who is asking COGA to approve instruction to the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) to decline exceptions to the 180-day rule for recommended YAAD’s and TSAD’s in order to adhere to the Standing Rules of the General Assembly.
The Standing Rules also state that the ratio of advisory delegates to commissioners should not exceed 1:3. The current numbers received from presbyteries indicate that the ratios will exceed the maximum ratio of advisory delegates to commissioners.

In the past, accommodations have been made for TSAD’s and YAAD’s whose names were not submitted until well within the 120-day mark for the General Assembly.

The Standing Rules in regards to this deadline are:

“Each theological institution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall nominate three students who … shall be designated by the institution as delegates and the other student shall be designated as the alternate. … These nominations shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly 180 days prior to the convening of the session of the General Assembly to which they are elected.” [Standing Rule B.2.e.(1)]

“Presbyteries shall elect young adult advisory delegates in sufficient time to permit the list of advisory delegates to be delivered to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly 180 days prior to the convening of the session of the General Assembly to which they are elected.” [Standing Rule B.2.d.(2)]

Upon review of the recommendations to COGA, it was moved to vote to approve the request, as presented. With no further questions, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the Office of the General Assembly not to accept YAAD and TSAD advisory delegates whose names are reported after the 180 deadline for reporting to the General Assembly.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Margaret Elliott, who provided an overview of the proposed COGA Task Force (Attachment 1).

Jim Wilson provided history regarding the motion proposed to the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) Board to consider a merger of PMA and OGA. A previous conference call led to a vote to approve a task force to convene in order to discuss a recommendation from COGA on how to proceed with consideration of reorganization.

It has been recommended that the 222nd General Assembly and other councils of the church share insights and perspectives in advance of the General Assembly.

How do we be that church and do that ministry together?
The conference call was open for discussion and questions.

What are we hoping to accomplish: how are we gathering the feedback?

The conversation needs to happen at the General Assembly. The assembly will receive the input for further in-depth discussion.

If the proposal to engage with wider church for input is approved, the next steps would be:

- To ensure the consultation process occurs soon.
- To establish a process for gathering the input that satisfies receiving the information and presenting it in a meaningful way.

This is different than how GA usually operates. It was recommended that a second working group of COGA members work to create a way of how to have that meaningful conversation.

- The goal is to have a true conversation on how they can be transformative and engage in a productive dialogue with one another.
- Allowing the GA to live up to the role as an effective council.
- Tom Hay added that, with the 180-day rule, we have 6 months to be engaged in discussion with the commissioners. This could give us the opportunity to help guide them through this new process.
- Heath Rada provided some insight of what he has been hearing from the wider church during his travels:
  - Please make sure that if you are going to gather information that it is not general information.
  - How do we invite people to honestly, constructively express how they are feeling?
  - What are the issues facing us?
  - What format might be suggested to COGA to make this happen?

Eileen Lindner added that the work of the task force grows out of a longer, deeper stream of answering where does the church council with itself on how to be the church. As COGA, we are charged uniquely to help shape what happens at the General Assembly. She hopes that it will be a way to allow the church to move into a new space. This is a huge job ahead of us to determine how to accomplish this task and how to level the playing field so everyone has a voice.
• A question arose regarding clarity as to why we can’t be more specific on structuring the organization. Structure is what got the conversation started, but this is not what it is about. In June 2014, a new church started. A conversation needs to take place to find language about its identity and the most life-giving way to live out ministry.
• Larissa Kwong Abazia added that we are in an era in the church where we cannot define ourselves in one particular way. We are trying to define ourselves at a time when it is even harder to do that.

Margaret Elliott provided a brief overview of the delegation’s visit to Foothills Presbytery. They met with 16 people and had a great conversation with presbytery representatives to listen and have an open discussion. The delegation offered suggestions on how they might word the overtures more effectively. They were grateful for the visit and practical recommendations.

Gradye Parsons added that the purpose of this process is not an attempt to find a remedy. The intention is find language to identify a means to determine who we are as a church and how to live into it.

With no further questions or discussion, a motion was proposed to vote to create a means of having a conversation. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** for the Task Force to come up with a way to execute the proposed document.

Jim Wilson requested that COGA members provide recommended changes to the document. The deadline for those recommendations will be July 31, 2015.

Two working groups will be formed in the task group: 1) Group to work on the design of the communication, focusing on the questions to be asked and how this communication gets out to the church. 2) Group to work on how the analysis of the communication will be provided to the General Assembly in a way that will be effective for the discussion and discernment.

Having no further business, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly conference call adjourned at 1:20 p.m. with Marcia Mount Shoop leading the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
Friends in Christ:

*Who is God calling us to be as a church in the 21st century?*

*What is God calling us to do as a church in the 21st century?*

These two questions are at the center of how we move forward as a church. All of us know that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has undergone, and is undergoing, tremendous change in a short period of time. Both in our polity and in the demographic reality of who we are – smaller, aging but transforming the way we are sent into the world – the PCUSA is a different denomination than it was a decade or more ago. Each of the councils of the church is in the process of discerning how to faithfully carry out ministry in this changing context: virtually every mid-council has engaged in redefining its purpose and structure; and sessions across the denomination are finding new and old ways to proclaim the Gospel more faithfully in the contexts in which they exist.

The agencies of the General Assembly have been no different. Both the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly have looked for new ways to carry out more faithfully the direction that they have been given by the General Assembly. Nevertheless, a number of voices have raised the question of whether the purposes and structures that have served us in the past are the ones that are right for a future of seeking to be faithful to Jesus Christ.

The Committee of the Office of the General Assembly has heard those voices, and has sought to discern how the Presbyterian Church can have a meaningful conversation about its current and future purpose and structure in a manner consistent with our polity and faithful to the bywords of the Reformation: “Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei” (“The church reformed, always to be reformed according to the Word of God”). F-2.02. Ultimately, the responsibility for such discernment belongs in our ecclesiology to the General Assembly. The process attached is intended to allow the 222nd General Assembly, as it meets in Portland next June, to begin to engage this process. To place the Assembly in a position to do that work, we are asking for you to share the insights and wisdom of your congregation, council or agency in the process described.

We trust that God will be at work in this process and in the work of the 222nd General Assembly, just as God continues to be at work in the life of congregations and councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) each day.

[Margaret + Gradye signatures]
A Call for Discerning A Meaningful Way Forward

Introduction

It is axiomatic today to suggest the PCUSA finds itself in a season of unrest. Conflicted over specific issues of doctrine and practice and confronted with budget shortfalls at all levels of the church increasingly there are calls to reconsider the structure of the agencies that came together to form the PC(USA). Despite the vigor of the mission and ministry work carried out by the PC(USA) on five continents, there is a yearning among us to do better, serve more faithfully and live more joyfully together. Such an aspiration will not be fulfilled by a hasty consolidation, downsizing, rightsizing, or re-ordering but rather through a shared discernment on our Reformed identity and the nature of the church to which Christ calls us. The reflections which follow grow out of the work of the Committee on the General Assembly as it prepares for the Portland Assembly.

Reflections on the Book of Order

1. General Assembly constitutes the bond of union, community, and mission among all its congregations and councils, to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of the whole church, it shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

2. In light of this charge, the General Assembly has responsibility and power to:

a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. This responsibility shall include establishing a comprehensive mission strategy and priorities for the church; establishing and maintaining ecumenical relationships and correspondence with other ecclesiastical bodies; uniting with or receiving under its jurisdiction other ecclesiastical bodies consistent with the faith and order of this church, subject to the provisions of G-5.02 and G-5.03; and commissioning, sending, and support of such mission personnel as will spread the good news of the grace of Jesus Christ to the world and foster the growth and development of God’s people.

b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received. This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord’s Supper at meetings of the General Assembly and other events and gatherings under its jurisdiction; authorizing the participation in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in ecumenical gatherings attended by authorized representatives of the General Assembly; and exercising pastoral care throughout the whole church in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the church may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.
c. nurture the covenant community of disciples. This responsibility shall include providing those services, resources, and programs performed most effectively at a national level; communicating with the whole church on matters of common concern; warning and bearing witness against errors in doctrine or immorality in the church and in the world; providing such services of education and nurture as its presbyteries may require; providing encouragement, guidance, and resources to presbyteries in the areas of mission, prophetic witness, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration; discerning and presenting with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, matters of truth and vision that may inspire, challenge, and educate both church and world; serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline; deciding controversies brought before it and advising and instructing in cases submitted to it, in conformity with this Constitution; authoritatively interpreting the most recent edition of the Book of Order in a manner binding on the whole church, in accordance with the provisions of G-6.02 or through a decision of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in a remedial or disciplinary case, with the most recent interpretation of the Book of Order being binding; and establishing and maintaining an office of the Stated Clerk.

3. Institutional Evolution

Over time, many of the General Assembly’s tasks, as outlined above have, been delegated to the PMA. This disconnect between the GA and its assigned responsibilities and its agent may be at the root of some of the unease. There have been Boards almost as long as the church existed. These Boards served the pragmatic function of mission on behalf of the GA between the assemblies. It was not until the 20th century that these Boards came to have a significant life of their own.

4. A Matter of Calling

One of the longings of our time may be the church’s need to reconnect its mission to its General Assembly. In other words, its missiology to its ecclesiology. To think of the GA as not the highest level of church but, rather representative of its core and the mission the whole church given in Jesus Christ, who alone is the Lord of the church.

5. Toward A Churchwide Consultation

Such a foundational reconsideration of ecclesiology and missiology will require a General Assembly that makes space to decide priorities based on system-wide consultation. This may require a revisioning of the commissioners task before the assembly as information gathering. While this change will likely initially confuse our long held representative/commissioner definitions, such a change holds promise of empowering commissioners to bring their insights to the Assembly. This consultation process would not replace the work commissioners are traditionally asked to accomplish but such a consultation would enrich the meeting of the GA.
OGA has long asserted that our main focus is to *bring people together to discern the mind of Christ*. In the story of the road to Emmaus, the two people (one a ruling elder and one a teaching elder no doubt) are walking and talking about what has happened to Jesus, their faith and their future. Jesus joins them. But it is not until they sit at table and break bread together that they recognize Jesus. The PC(USA) can see Jesus best when we gather together at the table we call the General Assembly. This is fundamental to who and whose we are. Recentering the General Assembly in the life of the church provides a new opportunity to reclaim our heritage.

6. **Preparation for Consultation**

In order for the Assembly to have input from the agencies, mid-councils and congregations concerning their own self-understanding some common questions will be posed to each entity. These questions might include:

- **a.** Who is God calling us to be as a church in the 21st century?
- **b.** What is God calling us to do as a church in the 21st century?

The quest is to bring to the General Assembly the responses to these queries. A whole day or more of the Assembly will be set aside for this discernment of denominational identity and mission. Based on that work the Assembly may decide how it wishes to organize itself to further its efforts. The Assembly claiming its purpose is the reconciliation quest. The greater church seeing itself as a whole rather than competing agencies and interests is reconciliation work. Our Reformed Ecclesial heritage teaches a commitment to Word, Sacraments, and the life of prayer and worship not only as an ordinary means of grace but also as constitutive of inclusive community indeed, the beloved community.
Tuesday August 25, 2015
The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) was convened via conference call at 11:00 a.m. by COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott. Carol McDonald opened the meeting with prayer.

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

COGA Members:
Margaret Elliott, Moderator
Jim Wilson, Vice Moderator
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio
Barbara Gaddis
Carol McDonald
Heath Rada
Leah Johnson
Kathy Matsushima
Wilson Kennedy
Leon Lovell-Martin
Marcia Mount Shoop
Jo Stewart
Vince Thomas

Excused:
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Lemuel Garcia-Arroyo
Larissa Kwong Abazia
Virginia Rainey
Eileen Lindner

OGA Staff:
Angie Stevens
Tom Hay
Toya Richards
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Jim Wilson, who provided an overview of the revised draft of the action, letter and information as a result of the conference call on July 22, 2015 and proceeding feedback (Attachment 1). He expressed the importance of how the data is collected and organized to be effective for discussion at the 222nd General Assembly (2016). All resources will be translated into Spanish and Korean, along with other languages, if possible.

The intent is to work with OGA staff to create and implement the survey.

Jo Stewart informed COGA that the PMA Board is discussing a survey with the wider church to advise the Mission Work Plan. She suggested that both of these efforts could be done together. Could this be coordinated with other agencies? Margaret Elliott confirmed that this will be an important part of moving forward with this plan, if it is approved.

The goal of this action is to create an environment for the 222nd General Assembly (2016) that will encourage an informed conversation for the General Assembly, which is not in conflict with the work that the PMA Board is doing.

Toya Richards Jackson proposed that the 6-Agency Communications team discuss a way to communicate COGA’s proposed plan in a cohesive way. It was suggested that this plan be owned by all agencies, with COGA leading the way. It was confirmed that directors of the other agencies are supportive of this action.

Suggested revision: Clarifying that this is a process that we are inviting the church into with the intention of connecting the church in its way forward, which includes the development of a process. Could there be a third work group to determine a way to encourage a relational process in the church wide consultation.

Gradye Parsons suggested that task force (A) determine a meaningful discernment process in the church wide consultation.

Barbara Gaddis suggested to not include the word, “ecclesiology” with concern that smaller or rural churches might be put off by the wording. It was suggested to use “polity” in its place.

Kathy Mastushima added that the communication should be as short as possible.

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

**VOTED to APPROVE** the proposed action with the suggested revisions and with a plan to coordinate the communication of the action with the other agencies.
Carol McDonald informed COGA that they would be meeting next week in Louisville, in consultation with Gradye Parsons and Cliff Kirkpatrick. She asked for prayers as they meet to discern their next steps.

Having no further business, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly conference call adjourned at 11:45 a.m. Margaret Elliott led the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
Monday October 26, 2015
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) meeting was convened at 12:00 noon on Monday October 26, 2015 in joint session with the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS). COGA Moderator, Margaret Elliott and PHS Moderator, Louis Weeks, in Ballroom D&E of the Sheraton Society Hill in Philadelphia, PA.

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
Kathy Matsushima
Carol McDonald
Gradye Parsons, Ex-Officio
Virginia Rainey
Vincent Thomas
Jo Stewart, PMA Board Representative

PHS Board:
Louis Weeks

Excused:
Heath Rada
Alejandra Spir-Haddad
Marcia Mount Shoop
Larissa Kwong Abazia
Leon Lovell-Martin

OGA Staff:
Joyce Lieberman
Kerry Rice
Thomas Hay
Sue Krummel
Toya Richards Jackson
Angie Stevens
Robina Winbush
Beth Hessel
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly participated in opening worship, led by Beth Hessel, Executive Director of PHS.

The joint session of COGA and PHS heard from Margaret Elliott, who provided an overview of the work that has taken place since the committee met in March 2015 (Attachment 1).

A delegation of COGA members met with representatives of Foothills Presbytery in South Carolina to discuss their concerns as reflected in drafts of the overtures to be submitted to the 222nd General Assembly (2016). The meeting provided an opportunity for the delegation to listen to the presbytery’s concerns and to provide guidance as the presbytery discerns the proposed overtures.

Margaret Elliott heard from the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns (ACWC), who requested an update on the status of the childcare plans for the 222nd General Assembly (2016). COGA vice-moderator, Jim Wilson, sent a letter with the requested details and a letter expressing gratitude for the committee’s work was received in response to Jim’s letter.

An advisory group has been formed at the request of the Moderator of the 221st General Assembly (2014), Heath Rada, to help guide him in his work. The group has met via conference call on two occasions.

COGA has worked to create a survey, which was launched on October 23, 2015 to get a perspective from the wider church on how they see the denomination’s way forward. COGA is encouraged by the overwhelming response to the survey, which will be available through December 2015.

The joint session of COGA and PHS heard from Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Grady Parsons, who provided an overview of his work since COGA last met in March, 2015.

He shared a letter he had sent to Donald Trump regarding his platform on immigration and how it is not congruent to the work and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), of which Trump claims he is a member. Gradye received a general response from Trump’s office, which he shared with the meeting participants.

Gradye traveled to Lebanon in May 2015 with a delegation of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, which included a visit to a Syrian refugee camp. His experience with refugees and detained immigrants in America who have sought sanctuary in the face of deportation is of great concern and should not be taken lightly. A request from the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations (GACEIR) requested that the Stated Clerk work with OGA’s Office of Immigration staff members, Teresa Waggener and Laura Polk to format a letter to Mr. Trump.
The joint session of COGA and PHS heard from PHS Board Moderator, Louis Weeks, who provided an update on the work of PHS and PHS Board.

The strategic planning committee has been working to create a strategic plan for the future of PHS. The proposed plan will be presented to COGA for review and approval in February 2016.

Louis welcomed PHS executive director, Beth Hessel, highlighting that she was awarded a PhD in American Religious History this past May. She is a teaching else who has served in congregations and mid councils.

Beth Hessel continued an overview of the work of the Presbyterian Historical Society. A grant was awarded to help fund the implementation of digitizing historical documents. A development team has been created to improve media presence and outreach, who has established a presence on Face Book and Twitter. Individual and congregational membership programs have been developed to encourage members to support PHS and the history of the denomination.

Money has been raised to restore the Calder statues in front of PHS. Grants have recently been awarded to help fund this project. The brick walkway in front of PHS has been repaired. A fund raising program has been put in place, offering the purchase of personalized bricks to be added to the walkway.

PHS is partnering with the Presbyterian Foundation to find ways to raise additional funds to continue to bring processes up to date, including cloud storage to replace on-site servers.

Beth acknowledged the caliber and dedication of PHS staff. She looks forward to working with them to continue to move forward and be relevant to the church and the general public.

The joint session of COGA and PHS heard from John Wood, who provided a review of the Per Capita Report (Attachment 2). He has worked closely with Takiyah Cuyler to streamline the way finances are managed and monitored. A balance sheet has been created, as well as a year-to-date budget activity report.

At this time, OGA is 11% under budget and it appears that this trend will continue through the end of 2016, anticipating a year-end report approximately 5% under budget. John acknowledged the PHS and OGA staff, who have been committed to making prudent and resourceful budget decisions.

John Wood has requested that COGA vote to write off uncollected Per Capita funds for 2014, totaling $1,245,000. This is a 10% increase from the prior year. Four presbyteries have not paid any Per Capita. John Wood is working with Sue Krummel and other staff to create new protocols to reach out to presbyteries.

With a motion on the floor, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly-

REPORT FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PER CAPITA REPORT
VOTED to APPROVE the write off of the 2014 Per Capita Uncollected funds, as proposed.

Takiyah Cuyler provided an overview of her work with OGA staff to determine the budgets of each area, and identify the best processes to develop the 2017-18 budgets.

The joint session of COGA and PHS participated in a panel discussion, led by PHS Moderator Louis Weeks. The panel explored the nature of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA) General Assembly as part of the continuing conversations on the way forward of the PCUSA.

The panel included:

- James Demming - Associate professor of modern European history at Princeton Theological Seminary
- William Yoo - Associate professor of American religious and cultural history at Columbia Theological Seminary
- Eileen Lindner - Senior pastor of Presbyterian Church at Tenefly in Tenefly, NJ & member of COGA.

Each panel member presented to the meeting participants and engaged in a Q&A session.

The joint session of COGA and PHS took a brief break and reconvened in separate groups for the remaining time in plenary.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reconvened in the Cook room of the Sheraton Society Hill. The committee members split up into separate working groups for discussion.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly engaged in discussion with the COGA task groups who have been planning the survey and implementation of the church wide conversation for the way forward of the PCUSA (Attachment 3).

Eileen Lindner spoke on behalf of the information-gathering working group to explore the best method of surveying the wider church. Instead of issuing a standard survey, which may not generate enough responses, the approach will be to invite the wider church to be part of the conversation. An online form will be posted, asking questions that will provide qualitative and quantitative data to procure the necessary demographic information along with detailed responses to questions to invite people to express their concerns. A study guide has been created to help start the conversation with small or larger groups.

Gradye Parsons expressed the importance of providing the General Assembly commissioners with this information in a way that is useful and transparent.
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly adjourned at 6:00 p.m. and met with the PHS Board for dinner and fellowship. The prayer and blessing of the meal was conducted at the dinner.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed for the night at 7:45 p.m.

**Tuesday October 27, 2015**

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was reconvened by Margaret Elliott at 9:02 a.m. in the Cook Room of the Sheraton Society Hill in Philadelphia, PA. Leah Johnson led the morning prayer. Margaret Elliott invited the meeting participants to introduce themselves and share what they enjoy about serving on COGA.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the proposed agenda. With no changes,

the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the proposed meeting agenda, as presented.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the minutes from the following COGA meetings and conference calls:

- COGA Meeting - March 2015
- COGA Coord. Committee Confer. Call - March 18, 2015
- COGA Coord. Committee Confer. Call - May 12, 2015
- COGA Conference Call - May 21, 2015
- COGA Conference Call - July 22, 2015
- COGA Conference Call - August 25, 2015

and -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the proposed minutes, with minor corrections.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tom Hay, who provided an overview of the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

There will be 594 commissioners at that next General Assembly, which is 60 fewer than the 221st General Assembly in 2014, and 218 advisory delegates. This number is greater than the required 1 to 3 ratio, which would equal 198. This 20 fewer than what the Standing Rules calls for.

The 12 proposed committees are as follows:

- GA procedures
- The Way Forward
- Mid Councils
- Church Polity/Ordered Ministry
- Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- Middle East Issues
- Immigration/Environmental Issues
• Mission Coordination
• Social Justice Issues
• Peacemaking and International Issues
• BoP, PILP, PPC, Foundation
• Theological and Church Growth Issues & Institutions

The Way Forward committee will cover:
• COGA Conversations
• Moderator’s Call
• Foothill Overtures
• Reports of the Review Committees for PMA and OGA
• Other Assorted Overtures.

This will be the place to bring the conversation into one house and to generate an informed discernment. There is concern that this committee’s work may be too big.

A question was brought to the group as to whether the Moderator’s Call to Church and COGA Conversation could be part of every committee conversation. Tom Hay confirmed that there would be a space for each committee to engage in conversation on a broader scale.

Upon hearing a question on the possibility of a committee to meet early, Tom Hay and Gradye Parsons confirmed that this has been done in the past and could be an option for the Way Forward committee, if deemed necessary.

Tom Hay reviewed the proposed docket for the 222nd General Assembly (Attachment 4). Worship will remain in plenary hall. A suggestion was made to invite mid councils and congregations to host a gathering to view the General Assembly opening worship. Further discussion affirmed the suggestion. It was recommended the COGA Moderator extend the invitation to the mid councils and congregations.

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

VOTED to APPROVE the COGA Moderator to extend an invitation to the mid councils and congregations to host a gathering to view the GA Opening worship via streaming video.

Tom Hay acknowledged that the technological challenges from the 221st General Assembly (2014) in Detroit, citing the importance of optimizing technology in the planning for the 222nd General Assembly. The Portland Convention Center has acknowledged the complexity of the needs of the event and is working to create solutions to meet our needs.

Tom Hay has requested COGA approve the recommended per diem amount of $50 for commissioners (Attachment 5). The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

VOTED to APPROVE the proposed per diem for the 222nd General Assembly at $50.
Tom Hay has requested for COGA to approve the recommended pre-registration at rate of $95 and on-site registration at $135. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the proposed pre-registration rate of $95 and on-site at $35, as presented.

Tom Hay requested for COGA to approve the proposed docket for the 222nd General Assembly. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the proposed docket for the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

Tom Hay has requested the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly to approve the proposed assembly assistants (Attachment 6). Some are committee assistants, trackers, platform managers, and backstage support.

It was requested that platform assistants serve in their roles, remaining neutral and not advocating for business presented to the General Assembly. It is important for the platform support to be even-handed and neutral.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the proposed list of assistants for the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

It was requested that one listed committee assistant’s location be changed from Philadelphia to Westchester, PA.

Tom welcomes recommendations from COGA members for additional General Assembly Assistants.

The timeline leading up to the 222nd General Assembly (2016) is as follows:

- December 21-180 Day Deadline - Report commissioners and YAADs
- February 19 - 120 Day Deadline Overtures amending the Book of Order
- April 19 - 60 Day Deadline Overtures with Financial Implications
- May 4 - 45 Day Deadline for ALL Overtures

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Mark Hostetter, who spoke on behalf of Moderator Heath Rada in his absence on the Moderator’s Call to Church (Attachment 7).

The Moderator senses a consensus on the need for a change in the way that the church is administrated. One factor is the lack of projected funding for World Mission. Mark was invited to lead a task force to help come up with ways to raise funds. The task force quickly learned that some donation attrition has been due to concern about the church and issues of the central agencies.
The task force did determine that this is not about agency structure. It is about how the ministries of our denomination function. They asked what could be done now to inspire others to think of this as a broader question to promote the Church to continue to thrive. Barbara Gaddis stated that trust in the mission of the church, trust in the leadership, as well as financial management are important and see that the denomination has problems in three of these areas.

Jim Wilson offered that, with any opportunity for people to share their thoughts on this matter, there needs to be a clear understanding of how the information is utilized in the decision-making at the General Assembly. This is the biggest challenge in meshing the Moderator’s Call with COGA’s conversation.

The Moderator has asked that questions can be created that could help the conversations as part of the Moderator’s Call be parallel. With the results of the meeting, how could the feedback or responses be carried over to the General Assembly?

Could there be a session for commissioners at the end of the General Assembly to discuss how they will be going home with the discussion that have taken place? The implementation task for the COGA conversations is working on the possibility of one of the small group talks at the General Assembly could be about this matter.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed for lunch at 11:55 a.m. Vince Thomas led the prayer for the blessing of the meal.

REPORT FROM COGA WORKING GROUPS

The site selection for the 225th General Assembly in 2022 will take place in the Midwest. Negotiations are continuing with potential hosts. The final recommendation will be presented to COGA in February 2016.

Reformed booklet
A book was published critiquing the work of the Middle East Committee from the 221st General Assembly (2014). Copies of the book were distributed to the committee. In the event that any overtures are presented to the 222nd General Assembly (2016), a COGA writing team selected for responses to GA overtures will create a response accordingly.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Kerry Rice, who provided a brief history on the establishment of National Certifying Bodies in the old form of government (Attachments 8 - 10). The new form of government stated that the naming of national certifying bodies was to be approved by the General Assembly.

The working group has created an application process for consideration for certifying bodies to complete. Applications will be reviewed and approved by COGA and referred to the General Assembly. After further discussion, a motion was brought to the floor to vote, then seconded. The Committee on
the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the proposed application process to be recognized as a national certifying body.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Eileen Lindner, who provided a brief review of the work of the statistics working group. The proposed supplemental form will be presented to COGA in February 2016.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Eileen Lindner, who provided a review of the work of the COGA Conversation Information Gathering working group. Conference calls have been scheduled to assist in generating the conversation within presbyteries and conversations.

The deadline for responding to the surveys will likely be extended. Gradye Parsons has asked Deborah Coe to determine the latest possible date for Research Services to complete their work in time. He has also expressed concern about how the data is analyzed to make the resulting product as impactful as possible. The intention is to have the analysis complete by 60 days prior to the General Assembly.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Jim Wilson, who provided an update on the work of the COGA Conversations Implementation working group.

The working group recommends that the conversation about the report and the future of the church start at Riverside Conversations and continue through a variety of formats throughout the General Assembly.

It was recommended that all committees receive the report as an informational item.

Wilson Kennedy suggested that conversations be carried over into group dinners at the General Assembly. Posting questions at the dinner tables could generate more in-depth discussions. Jim Wilson agreed that this could be a good option, with the intention that the conversations continue past those specific questions.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly convened in executive session at 3:30 p.m.

The meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly took at break at 4:00 p.m. to walk or drive to Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church for the next session.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly convened in joint session with PHS at Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, PA. The panel discussion is focused on Per Capita: the history, the present and strategy for the future.

The panelists for this session includes:

- Vince Thomas - COGA member
- Joan Bergsteinsson - PHS Board, Chair of the Finance
Committee
• Jim Wilson - COGA Vice Moderator
• George Abdo - PHS Board, Strategic Planning Committee Chair

Upon completion of the panel discussion, the meeting was open to questions for the participants.

COGA and the PHS Board gathered for worship in the Old Pine Church sanctuary.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and Presbyterian Historical Society Board proceeded to fellowship hall at Old Pine Presbyterian Church for dinner and fellowship with PHS staff at 6:45 p.m.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recessed for the

**Wednesday October 28, 2015**

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 heard from Sue Krummel, who provided an update on the Reconciliation Project. A website has been set up and dedicated phone number has been established to create a way for presbyteries to contact the General Assembly to request someone to come to the presbytery to present on a given topic.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Barbara Gaddis, who provided an update on the General Assembly task group for reference checks between presbyteries. The task group contacted the presbyteries that have had issues, asking who within the presbytery requested the reference check. The task group is continuing this work and a final report will be provided at the COGA meeting in February 2016.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Jim Wilson, who provided an update on the Korean Task Force. The first meeting convenes today, October 28, 2015. An update will be provided in February 2016.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Virginia Rainey, who provided an overview of her experience at the Polity Conference, which took place in early October 2015. Worship leadership was exceptional.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Wilson Kennedy, who presented the report of the Christian Educators Task Force (Attachment 11). The group met several times over the phone and once face to face. The task force was directed by the 221st General Assembly (2014) to look at the future of Certified Christian Educators.

The task force determined its purpose in the following areas:
• To recognize and enhance the ministries of persons called to serve the church in educational ministries.

• To uphold denominational standards for the preparation and performance of those serving in educational ministries.

• To acknowledge and clarify the mutual accountability between the councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and those serving in educational ministries.

• To set specific achievable goals for the ongoing development of those serving in educational ministries and to foster support for them as they pursue these goals.

Much of this has been implemented with the work of OGA’s Martha Miller and Kerry Rice. The task force has made a number of additional recommendations that will lift up the importance of Christian educator certification to the denomination in a way that will emphasize the value of Christian educators; and develop ways to connect certified Christian educators with one another, with those who could provide them with guidance and further development. The task force’s recommendations are directed to: presbyteries, the Education Certification Committee, the Office of Ordered Ministries and Education, and COGA.

The Educator Certification Task Force presents a recommendation for COGA to approve a referral to the 222nd General Assembly to create a task force whose work will focus on the Reformed perspective of Christian Education in the 21st Century. If approved by the General Assembly, the special committee will report the results of its work at the 223rd General Assembly (2018).

Jim Wilson expressed concern that certified Christian educators are not eligible to participate in benefit plans offered by the Board of Pensions (BoP). Though the understanding is that this is not possible due to IRS regulations, Gradye Parsons believes that it would be beneficial for the special committee to include a study on the feasibility of the BoP to include certified Christian educators in its benefit programs.

Martha Miller stated that those certified educators that are employed full time are becoming fewer and fewer. Most educators now are either part time or not being paid for their work.

A motion has been presented to amend Recommendation D to include an exploration of the feasibility of the BoP to include certified Christian educators in its benefit programs. Seconded

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED to APPROVE** the amendment to Recommendation D. The final language will be communicated to COGA and revised in the COGA recommendation to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

A motion was presented to vote on the recommendation, as amended above.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -
VOTED to APPROVE the recommendation to be referred to the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Carol McDonald, who provided an update on the work on the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee. The committee was nominated by the General Assembly Nominating Committee and elected in the 221st General Assembly (2014). They have met twice in Louisville, Kentucky and have spent a lot of time building community.

So far, there have been 22 requests, with one person deciding not to move forward. The application process is extensive with several narratives, as well as a video to be submitted to the committee, answering the question, “Why should I be Stated Clerk of the General Assembly?”

The nominating committee will be meeting again January 20-22 at Village Church in Kansas City, KS. Some Skype interviews will take place at that time. The first round of face to face will be early March. The committee will provide its report on June 19th with their selection, and they expect that it would be highly likely that there will be challengers to the nomination.

A website has been launched www.oga.pcusa.org/scnc.

Carol asked COGA to lift up any thoughts or feedback as the nominating committee completes its work:

- Have a vision of the qualities of the clerk before the names, to avoid a popularity contest. Focus on the skillsets necessary to serve the church.
- Visionary

COGA offered its gratitude for the tremendous time and thought the Stated Clerk Nominating Committee has committed to this process.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from PMA Board vice-chair, Jo Stuart, who provided an overview of her with the PMA Board.

Tony De La Rosa has been selected as the interim executive director of the PMA. She acknowledged the work of Barry Creech and Earline Williams who served together in a temporary capacity until the interim Executive Director starts in early December 2015. A search committee has been created for the search for the permanent director. Landon Whitsett will chair the search committee. No specific timeline has been set in place in order to not create pressure to select someone prior to the General Assembly. The selection can be made and submitted to the 223rd General Assembly (2018).

The search committee for the permanent executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency is to include an ex-officio COGA member. Eileen Lindner expressed an interest in serving on the search committee on behalf of COGA.
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly -

**VOTED** to **APPROVE** Eileen Lindner as ex-officio member of the search committee for the permanent Executive Director of the PMA.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Carol McDonald, who provided an overview on the End of Term review of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. She noted the standing rules direct this work to the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly. This will be done in the COGA meeting in February.

Jim Wilson asked Carol to be part of the group to work on the review. Eileen Lindner noted that this is also an opportunity for the Stated Clerk to put down some burdens. She suggested that Vince Thomas would be an excellent addition to the review team.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Leah Johnson who provided an overview of the work of the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations. She highlighted the Interreligious Stance, which was approved by the 221st General Assembly (2014). This term of the committee has suspended the standard framework of the committee and has been working on ways to develop accompanying resources for the Interreligious Stance for theological education, mid councils, and congregations. The most recent meeting in September 2015 was focused on mid councils.

Robina Winbush provided an update on the additional business of the GACEIR. GACEIR decided to invite representatives of the following faith traditions: Jewish, Muslim and one of the following three non-Abrahamic faith traditions: Mormon, Buddhist, and Indigenous Hawaiian.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly heard from Tom Hay regarding hotel workers rights. The 221st General Assembly (2014) passed a resolution for the OGA and PMA to give preference to hotels where workers’ right are protected. Deb Davies is working with other PCUSA staff to develop a policy that is workable by meeting planners. A draft of the policy will be distributed with a request for approval at the next COGA meeting in February 2016.

Leah Johnson brought to the committee’s attention the need for the outgoing COGA members to form the Nominating Committee for the new Moderator and Vice-Moderator of the next term. Jim Wilson has affirmed Leah’s request and will request for Margaret Elliott to formally establish the nominating committee, which is presumed to be: Leah Johnson, Eileen Lindner, Vince Thomas and Virginia Rainey.

The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly reviewed the proposed future meeting dates for 2016 and 2017 (Attachment 12). The Polity Conference in 2016 is scheduled to take place at approximately the same time. It has been suggested that COGA convene in St. Louis.

Having no further items of business, the meeting of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday October 28, 2015. The committee joined together for casual lunch in the meeting room prior to departing for flights home.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Stevens
Recorder
## Moderator Travel
### March - October, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Presbytery/Synod</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Brief Description of Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 23, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>Memorial Service for Syngman Rhee - Watts Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26-30, 2015</td>
<td>Central Nebraska/Lakes &amp; Prairies</td>
<td>Broken Bow, NE</td>
<td>Presbytery Meeting - Attend meeting and address presbytery. Visit churches in the area. Requesting 2-3 visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15 - 17, 2015</td>
<td>PCUSA</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>PMA Board Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 18, 2015</td>
<td>Chicago/Lincoln Trails</td>
<td>Arlington Heights, IL</td>
<td>Presbytery Assembly Meeting - Address the Presbytery Assembly on experience and issues facing the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25, 2015</td>
<td>Western North Carolina/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Black Mountain, NC</td>
<td>Black Mountain Presbyterian Church - Presbytery Women of the church gathering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 25-26, 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>Salisbury Presbyterian Church- 75th Anniversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 28, 2015</td>
<td>Lehigh Presbytery</td>
<td>Redding, PA</td>
<td>Presbytery Meeting and conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3, 2014</td>
<td>Coastal Carolina/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Laurinburg, NC</td>
<td>Deliver convocation address to students and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12, 2015</td>
<td>Shenandoah/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Hot Springs, VA</td>
<td>Shenandoah Presbytery Meeting - 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15, 2015</td>
<td>West Virginia/Trinity</td>
<td>Elkins, WV</td>
<td>Davis Memorial Presbyterian Church/Davis &amp; Elkins College - preach during worship on Sunday following Friday's Baccalaureate Service at the college and share in fellowship. Tour the area on the preceding Saturday. Begins at 7:00 p.m. Friday and ends w/ lunch/fellowship on Sunday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18, 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>NYC</td>
<td>Heath Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24, 2015</td>
<td>Western North Carolina/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Asheville, NC</td>
<td>Lead worship at FPC Asheville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 5-8, 2015</td>
<td>Des Moines/North Central Iowa/Lakes &amp; Prairies</td>
<td>Asheville, NC</td>
<td>Joint Presbytery Meeting - Bring Greetings, Lead Worship and participate in the 1st ever joint meeting of the two presbyteries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14, 2015</td>
<td>Black Mountain Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>Black Mountain, NC</td>
<td>Preach at Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 19, 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>Princeton, NJ</td>
<td>Meet w/ Craig Barnes at Princeton Seminary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Montreat, NC</td>
<td>Subcommittee Meeting of the Montreat Board - 10:00 or 1:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 5, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Montreat, NC</td>
<td>Lead worship at Montreat Conf. Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 10, 2015</td>
<td>National Black Presbyterian Caucus</td>
<td>Charlotte, NC</td>
<td>Speak at plenary - Plenary begins 9:00 a.m. and join the group for lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 11, 2015</td>
<td>Salem/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Winston-Salem, NC</td>
<td>Highland Presbyterian Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 12, 2015</td>
<td>Western North Carolina/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Crossnore, NC</td>
<td>Peggy is welcome to attend - Mayland Fellowship - Gathering of local rural pastors - Speak at program to share experience as Moderator/Q&amp;A session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 17-18, 2015</td>
<td>Presbytery of Northern Kansas</td>
<td>Salina, KS (Webster Conference Center)</td>
<td>Attend Presbytery Meeting - Waiting for more details. The invitation was blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26, 2015</td>
<td>Shenandoah/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Lexington, VA</td>
<td>Collerstown Presbyterian Church - Preach at 11:00 a.m. Morning Worship and attend Luncheon following service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 28, 2015</td>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Harrisonburg, VA</td>
<td>Massanutta Springs Bible &amp; Church Music Conferences - Speak about PCUSA at two times. Q&amp;A session</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Moderator Travel
### March - October, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Presbytery/Synod</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Brief Description of Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 30-Aug. 1, 2015</td>
<td>OGA</td>
<td>Knoxville, TN</td>
<td>BIG TENT!!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 6th, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Montreat, NC</td>
<td>Women’s Conference w/ Peggy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 7-14, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Colorado!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 16, 2015</td>
<td>Plains &amp; Peaks/Rocky Mountains</td>
<td>Boulder</td>
<td>Preach in Boulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 20, 2015</td>
<td>REWM - PCUSA</td>
<td>Montreat</td>
<td>Greetings at 10:45 plenary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 15-16, 2015</td>
<td>San Diego/Southern CA</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>Fly into San Diego and Preach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 18-19, 2015</td>
<td>San Diego/Southern CA</td>
<td>San Diego, CA</td>
<td>Fellowship National Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 21-23, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Montreat</td>
<td>MLK Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 24, 2015</td>
<td>Mid-South</td>
<td>Memphis, TN</td>
<td>Speak at Presbytery of Mid-South Meeting - Meeting 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. - Sermon and Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 30, 2015</td>
<td>Lake Huron/Covenant</td>
<td>Bay City, MI</td>
<td>Westminster Presbyterian Church - 150th Anniversary Celebration - Bring greetings - More details to come - 10:30 worship service -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 6, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Greenwood, SC</td>
<td>Lead worship - and Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 9-10, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>New York City, NY</td>
<td>Global Mission Task Force Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 13, 2015</td>
<td>E. Tennessee/Living Waters</td>
<td>Chattanooga, TN</td>
<td>Rivermont Presbyterian Church - Mission Fair Lead-In - 10:00 a.m. worship followed by luncheon meeting. Heath is being asked to lead worship discussing the importance of global mission in the PCUSA and discuss global mission work during term at the luncheon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15-16, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>Union Theological Seminary - Speak at Opening Convocation - 11:45 a.m.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 17-19, 2015</td>
<td>Baltimore/Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>Randallstown, MD</td>
<td>Mount Paran Presbyterian Church - 300th Anniversary - Preach and Q&amp;A session on September 17 and bring greetings and congratulations from the denomination, to offer prayer of thanksgiving and available for fellowship. This is an invitation from the presbytery and the congregation. NOT NEEDED FOR ALL 4 DAYS. Perhaps lead worship on Sept. 17 and preach/fellowship on Sept. 18 - Sept. 17 Sept 18 Morning, tour of Baltimore and lunch. Afternoon, Mt. Paran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 19, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Greensboro, NC</td>
<td>Catawba Synod event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>National Press Club - Bread for the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 22, 2015</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>COTE - Talk to COTE person with pcusa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 23-25, 2015</td>
<td>PCUSA</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>PMA Board Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 29-30, 2015</td>
<td>Mission/Sun</td>
<td>Austin, TX</td>
<td>Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church - Installation of Mark Ramsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1, 2015</td>
<td>Grace Presbytery</td>
<td>Richardson, TX</td>
<td>Grace Presbytery Meeting - 20 minute speech w/ 60 minute Q&amp;A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Moderator Travel

**March - October, 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Presbytery/Synod</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Brief Description of Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 9-11, 2015</td>
<td>Polity Conference</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>Lead Worship at First Presbyterian Church Portland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 11, 2015</td>
<td>Moderators Conference</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>ARMSS/POAMN 2015 Conference b- Bring Greetings - speak on the state of the PCUSA and about travels as Moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 11-12, 2015</td>
<td>Moderators Conference</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>ARMSS/POAMN 2015 Conference b- Bring Greetings - speak on the state of the PCUSA and about travels as Moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 15, 2015</td>
<td>Santa Fe/Southwest</td>
<td>Albuquerque</td>
<td>150th Anniversary of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. Visit with Seminaries, Amity Event, and area churches in China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 22-Nov 12, 2015</td>
<td>World Mission</td>
<td>Taiwan &amp; China</td>
<td>150th Anniversary of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. Visit with Seminaries, Amity Event, and area churches in China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BUDGET REPORT FOR COGA MEETING OCTOBER 26-28, 2015

a. For Information:

REVIEW BUDGET PERFORMANCE (JAN-Sept) 2015

Revenue: Approximately 67% of the total apportionment for 2015 has been received as of September 30, 2015, compared with the 61% received as of September 30, 2014. The total income from investments in the undesignated side are about 70% behind the budgeted amounts at the end of the 3rd quarter (75% last year), while an unrealized loss of about $4,785 was recorded during this period. The budget for Investment income will need a review and change in methodology as the actual performance has been so far below the annual budget. We will do this for the 2017-18 budget cycle.

Expenditure: We have changed the report this cycle to reflect nine months actual expenses to nine months budget amounts. Historically, OGA financial reports have compared year to date information against the full annual budget. This provides leadership with an inability to track adverse trends as the trends are occurring. These new tools will allow OGA leadership to see financial information in a more real time basis.

OGA Per capita is $943,361 or 10.9% under budget in expenses as of September 30, 2015. We believe there are certain expenses not yet accrued by PMA that will reduce this positive variance. However, even with the unrecorded accrued expenses we believe OGA is approx. 7% under budget for 2015 and should be approximately 5.5% to 6% under budget for the year.

Balance Sheet: We have enclosed an OGA Balance Sheet as of September 30, 2015. The balance sheet indicates that OGA is financially stable with little debt. This is important as we navigate difficult economic times ahead. The balance sheet will allow OGA to plan its future in a prudent and clear manner. The cash position is strong but expected to erode considerably over the next 4 years as membership declines impact Per Capita funding and could drop below the required minimum reserve level by 2018-19 without intervention.

The strength of the balance sheet should buffer OGA from short term tremors that could impact the denomination. We know we are facing difficult decisions and issues. It is a blessing to do so from a position of strength.

(Attachment 1 – Per Capita Financial Statements)

b. For Action:

UNCOLLECTIBLE PER CAPITA 2014

The uncollectible GA per capita receipts for the past year 2014 which impacts the 2015 budget, now stands at $1,245,000, an increase of $10,000 over the previous year ($1,235,000 in 2013). The total uncollected for 2014 represents about 9.6% of the total billed (9.5% last year). We have contacted all presbyteries that have outstanding balances. Most of them have churches withholding funds and are unable to make up the difference; several presbyteries indicated that they are experiencing financial problems. Other Presbyteries are increasing their legal reserves in disputes with churches leaving the denomination. At this point, we do not expect to receive any
more per capita payments for 2014. It is therefore appropriate to write off the balance uncollected per capita amounting to $1,245,000 by end year, and report it as uncollectible in the 2015 financial statements.

The provision for uncollectible 2014 per capita on the 2015 balance sheet is $1,075,000. Consequently, this will have a negative impact on the budget by about $170,000 which we expect to counter partly, from savings through under expenditure, and other measures. A brief analysis of the Per Capita uncollectible trend follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over $50K</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25-50K</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15-25K</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10-15K</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5-10K</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$5K</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: in 2014, 121 presbyteries paid in full or 69.5%

(Attachment 2 – Outstanding Per Capita Receipts 2014 - August 2015).

**Suggested Recommendation:**
The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly recommends that the uncollectible balance for 2014 GA per capita be closed and written off by end year 2015, after setting off recovery from the 2014 budgeted provision for unrecoverable per capita, the balance of the necessary write off of $170,000 will impact the 2015 budget year. We are also recommending an increase in the 2015 uncollectible of $200,000 from the original budget of $1 million dollars to $1.2 million.

c. **For Approval:**
**BUDGET PRINCIPLES & GUIDELINES**

OGA commenced the budget process of the 2017-18 budget in July of this year. We have been evaluating several models of changing variables to determine the most conservative approach to the budget. The OGA leadership team is currently evaluating models that will provide OGA with a sustainable budget through 2020 and beyond.
ATTACHMENT I
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

AS OF

SEPTEMBER 30, 2015
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Per Capita
COMBINED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION
September 30, 2015 and 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Total 09/30/2015</th>
<th>Total 09/30/2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>$204,141</td>
<td>$144,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term investments</td>
<td>3,119,070</td>
<td>1,752,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OGA Foundation</td>
<td>883,623</td>
<td>859,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Capita Investments</td>
<td>4,062,530</td>
<td>3,983,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term investments</td>
<td>3,753,917</td>
<td>3,728,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endowment Investments</td>
<td>744,181</td>
<td>751,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments PILP</td>
<td>378,941</td>
<td>375,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apportionment receivable--current year</td>
<td>4,959,880</td>
<td>5,036,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apportionment receivable--prior year</td>
<td>1,244,942</td>
<td>1,235,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowance for Uncollectible Apportionments</td>
<td>(1,075,867)</td>
<td>(1,409,615)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivable - Big Tent</td>
<td>1,871</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other receivables</td>
<td>27,257</td>
<td>244,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivable - PMA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid-Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land, Building and Fixed Assets</td>
<td>3,689,834</td>
<td>3,273,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accumulated depreciation</td>
<td>(2,313,335)</td>
<td>(2,118,412)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19,680,995</strong></td>
<td><strong>$17,881,678</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Liabilities and Net Assets**

**Liabilities:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total 09/30/2015</th>
<th>Total 09/30/2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable-PMA</td>
<td>$195,942</td>
<td>$259,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable</td>
<td>1,559</td>
<td>(174,650)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receipts in Process/ Other</td>
<td>323,006</td>
<td>453,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total liabilities</strong></td>
<td><strong>$520,508</strong></td>
<td><strong>$538,540</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Net assets:**

**Unrestricted:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Total 09/30/2015</th>
<th>Total 09/30/2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undesignated</td>
<td>$11,990,834</td>
<td>9,396,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated</td>
<td>3,767,116</td>
<td>4,553,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Fund</td>
<td>1,269,683</td>
<td>1,269,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Restricted</td>
<td>1,348,225</td>
<td>1,338,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently Restricted</td>
<td>784,630</td>
<td>784,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total net assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19,160,488</strong></td>
<td><strong>$17,343,138</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Liabilities and Net Assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total 09/30/2015</th>
<th>Total 09/30/2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19,680,995</strong></td>
<td><strong>$17,881,678</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PER CAPITA
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
For The Period Ending September 30, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCES OF FUNDING</th>
<th>2015 Budget Rev’d App</th>
<th>2015 YTD BUDGET</th>
<th>2015 Actual</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>% Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Apportionments</td>
<td>$12,368,937</td>
<td>$9,276,703</td>
<td>$9,144,580</td>
<td>$(132,123)</td>
<td>-1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Investment Income</td>
<td>213,000</td>
<td>$159,750</td>
<td>$47,313</td>
<td>$(112,437)</td>
<td>-70.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$(1,500)</td>
<td>-100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Unrealized/Realized Gain (Loss)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(4,785)</td>
<td>(4,785)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL SOURCES OF FUNDING</strong></td>
<td><strong>$12,583,937</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,437,953</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,187,108</strong></td>
<td><strong>$(250,845)</strong></td>
<td><strong>-2.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURES</th>
<th>2015 Budget Rev’d App</th>
<th>2015 YTD BUDGET</th>
<th>2015 Actual</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>% Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Church Wide Ministries</td>
<td>$2,780,601</td>
<td>$2,085,451</td>
<td>$1,839,287</td>
<td>$246,163</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ecclesial &amp; Ecumenical Ministries</td>
<td>2,772,549</td>
<td>$2,079,412</td>
<td>$1,901,438</td>
<td>177,974</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Mid Council Ministries</td>
<td>1,595,849</td>
<td>$1,196,887</td>
<td>$1,007,005</td>
<td>$189,882</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Presbyterian Mission Agency/Board</td>
<td>1,493,601</td>
<td>$1,120,201</td>
<td>734,594</td>
<td>385,607</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Other PMA Supervised Work</td>
<td>1,754,664</td>
<td>$1,315,998</td>
<td>$1,262,575</td>
<td>53,423</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Other Expenses</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
<td>34,688</td>
<td>40,312</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Uncollectible Apportionments</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>$750,000</td>
<td>900,000</td>
<td>$(150,000)</td>
<td>-20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td><strong>$11,497,264</strong></td>
<td><strong>$8,622,948</strong></td>
<td><strong>$7,679,587</strong></td>
<td><strong>$943,361</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.94%</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Committed for Subsequent Assemblies: $1,354,306, $1,015,730, $1,015,730, $(1) - 0.0%

Estimated Under-Expenditure: $- - $- - $26 -

Planned use of Reserve: $- - $- - $- -

**TOTAL EXPENSES & COMMITMENTS** $12,851,570 $9,638,678 $8,695,317 $943,361 9.8%

Net to or (from) Reserve: $(267,633) $(200,725) $491,791 $692,516 -345.0%
OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
UNCOLLECTABLE PER CAPITA BALANCES
AUGUST 31, 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESBYTERY</th>
<th>APPORTIONMENT</th>
<th>BALANCE</th>
<th>% UNPAID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>GRACE</td>
<td>284,275</td>
<td>139,899</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW COVENANT</td>
<td>224,731</td>
<td>115,352</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREATER ATLANTA</td>
<td>288,396</td>
<td>98,843</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
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<td>CHARLESTON-ATLANTA</td>
<td>120,962</td>
<td>79,962</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALEM</td>
<td>215,697</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAMPA BAY</td>
<td>145,468</td>
<td>51,438</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHENANGO</td>
<td>77,543</td>
<td>44,272</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEACE RIVER</td>
<td>122,001</td>
<td>42,050</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAN DIEGO</td>
<td>101,923</td>
<td>37,310</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEAVER-BUTLER</td>
<td>81,509</td>
<td>35,531</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MISSION</td>
<td>193,183</td>
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<td>18%</td>
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<td>SANTA BARBARA</td>
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<td>65%</td>
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<td>115,318</td>
<td>28,447</td>
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<td>BLACKHAWK</td>
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<td>28,421</td>
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<td>28,200</td>
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<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24,058</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>33,787</td>
<td>23,787</td>
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<td>23,553</td>
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<td>225,082</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATLANTIC KOREAN</td>
<td>18,764</td>
<td>18,764</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST AUGUSTINE</td>
<td>121,685</td>
<td>17,252</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<td>16,343</td>
<td>16,343</td>
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<td>15,409</td>
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<td>PRESBYTERY</td>
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<td>BALANCE</td>
<td>% UNPAID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
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<td>% UNPAID</td>
</tr>
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Methods for discussing the identity and purpose of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Introduction

Thank you for joining the conversation as the entire church councils with itself to consider how God is calling us forward together. This season of discernment is a watershed moment in the history of our denomination and this inquiry, this opportunity to listen to one another and respond, will be valuable information when the church gathers as the 222nd General Assembly (2016) next June in Portland, Oregon.

We listen to ourselves and to each other in order to be faithful to the Book of Order’s call in G-3.0501, “…. to the end that the whole church becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.” Through the use of World Café, Mutual Invitation, or another method of your choice, you are invited to listen to the hopes, dreams, and concerns of the Presbyterians in your Sunday school class, session, presbytery, affinity group, or whatever body in which you may assemble. The methods we commend for your use in these conversations help to cultivate intentional listening and honest sharing in a mode that does not include debate or argument. These models create space for everyone in the conversation to be on equal ground so that all of us can listen and be heard.

This conversation starter provides options for groups to engage each other and the inquiry questions. You are encouraged to practice the methods described below and then use them as you discuss the inquiry questions. You may respond to the questions online individually or as a group.

The models suggested for this conversation are,

1. Active Listening

   The key elements of active listening listed below will help you listen to the others engaged in this conversation.

   a. Pay attention
      (1) Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge their message.
      (2) Don’t look at your watch, phone, other people, or activities in or beyond the room.
      (3) Refrain from side conversations (even if they are whispered).

   b. Show that you are listening
      (1) Be aware of your body language—crossed arms can make you seem closed or negative.
      (2) Encourage the speaker to continue by “short” verbal comments.
      (3) Offer some facial expressions, such as a nod or a smile.

   c. Defer judgment
      (1) Avoid making assumptions.
      (2) Be empathic and nonjudgmental.
      (3) Consider the communication from the perspective of the speaker.
      (4) Let the presentation run its course.
      (5) Listen to the entire message before interjecting with your own comments.

These suggestions come from the University of Adelaide’s (Australia) Writing Center Learning Guide on “Active Listening”
2. World Café

This model is best used in large groups (for this discussion, a group of twenty or more could warrant this process). World Café allows people to mingle with one another and cross-pollinate ideas by answering questions with different participants during each “round.” Times of sharing after each discussion question will allow themes to emerge. Please note that if you use this model, the discussion will take at least two hours if all questions are completed in one sitting!

a. Preparation:
   (1) Set up the room with tables and 4–5 chairs around each table. Place butcher paper and assorted markers on top of the tables.
   (2) Be sure to make the room welcoming and inviting!

b. Process:
   (1) Greet people as they come into the room and encourage them to sit down at the prepared tables.
   (2) Welcome everyone to the discussion. Explain the process to the gathered group, highlighting a few key concepts that will allow the process to be successful: providing space so that each participant is able to share during the various “rounds,” sitting with different people each time the participants change tables, and using the markers to record ideas through words or pictures as the conversation progresses.
   (3) Tell the group that this first round will be to practice. Say, “This summer’s theme at General Assembly is ‘The Hope in Our Calling.’ Share with those at your table one way that you experience hope as you serve in your church. This will be a shorter timetable.”
   (4) Invite people to move to a different table, sitting with new participants. Ask the first question: __________________________. Participants will have twenty minutes to discuss the question with those at their table. Remind them to record any themes, points, etc. of sharing since we are only practicing. Take 1–2 minutes each to share with your table.
   (5) Signal to the group that the discussion time is complete. Ask the group what responses stand out to them. Once sharing is complete, invite participants to move to another table, sitting with different people once again.
   (6) Continue the process until all the questions have been completed, taking twenty minutes each with a brief time of reporting back.
   (7) Have the groups hang up the pieces of paper on the wall so that people can see what ideas, themes, and issues have been raised.

Feel free to use this resource for full instructions about the World Café model: http://www.theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf
3. Mutual Invitation

Mutual Invitation is a method of conversation that makes space for everyone to listen and everyone to speak. Everyone comes to a conversation with different habits, cultures, and styles of conversation. All of these dynamics bring with them ways of using personal power in a group—some people are eager to speak, others hold their cards close to the vest, and still others may wait to hear what the group thinks and develop their view from there. Mutual Invitation makes room for all these different customs, habits, and styles. And Mutual Invitation encourages intentional listening and full participation.

a. Norms of Mutual Invitation:
   (1) Who gets to speak first is chosen by an impartial standard (e.g. who has a birthday closest to today, who was born the furthest geographically from where we are today, who woke up the earliest, etc.).
   (2) While one person is talking, everyone else ONLY listens (that means do not interrupt with questions, comments, affirmations, or disagreements).
   (3) When the person speaking is finished, he/she then invites the next person by name to speak.
   (4) If the person who has finished speaking forgets to invite the next person, no one else in the group should do it for her/him. Simply remind her/him that s/he can now invite someone to speak.
   (5) When you are invited to speak you can choose to speak at that time or you can pass. Even if you pass it is still your turn to invite the next person to speak.
   (6) Whoever went last on the first question begins speaking on the second question or passes and invites someone else.

b. Suggestions for getting started:
   (1) Share the norms of Mutual Invitation with the group and make sure everyone understands the method.
   (2) Have a practice round using a Bible passage and a Lectio Divina format to get used to how Mutual Invitation works.
      (a) You can have a designated passage read aloud by a volunteer.
      (b) The question for response in the round of Mutual Invitation can be something like:
         (i) What is a word or phrase in the passage that makes an impression on you?
         (ii) What is difficult about this passage?
         (iii) How is God calling you in this passage?
   (3) Use a low-stakes question to try a practice round:
      What is your favorite food? Where did you live when you were ten-years-old?
      What is the furthest you’ve traveled from where the group is meeting at that time?
   (4) Resist the urge to have a facilitator. Mutual Invitation will facilitate your conversation and the process makes a facilitator not only unnecessary, but problematic for the process to work. Everyone will have a chance to speak and everyone will practice the art of intentional listening by observing the norms of Mutual Invitation.
   (5) If there is someone in the group who is not observing the norms, call a timeout and reread the norms to remind the group of the method of conversation being used for the discussion. Do not ignore when the norms are violated. It is important for the group to be good stewards of the process for it to work.

For additional information on Mutual Invitation see Eric Law, *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb*. (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1993).
**For Action:**

### 222nd General Assembly (2016)

*“The Hope in Our Calling” Ephesians 1:18*

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<td>Group Lunch</td>
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<td><strong>Plenary Meeting 1</strong></td>
<td>2:30 - 5:30</td>
<td>Plenary Meeting 3</td>
<td>Committee Meetings III 1:30</td>
<td>Committee Meetings VI 1:30</td>
<td>Plenary Meeting 4</td>
<td>Plenary Meeting 7</td>
<td>Plenary Meeting 10</td>
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<td>[Moderator’s Election]</td>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Committee Meetings I</td>
<td>Committee Meetings IV</td>
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<td>2:00</td>
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*Attachment 4*
Per Diem Recommendation – 222nd General Assembly

Recommendation: That the COGA approve a per diem of $50 ($12 for breakfast, $13 for lunch, $25 for dinner) for commissioners, advisory delegates, OGA staff and volunteers, and members of OGA-related committees for the 222nd General Assembly (2016).

Background: The OGA recommends that COGA keep the meal per diem at the same rates as for the 221st General Assembly.

OGA’s practice is to research prices at the assembly hotel restaurants and at outlets in and near the convention center as we consider the GA per diem for commissioners, advisory delegates, and OGA staff, volunteers, and elected members. As usual, it would be a challenge to dine in the hotel restaurants and stay within these amounts, but there are less expensive options in outlets in and near the convention center and hotels. The blocks around the convention center actually offer more budget options than more expensive outlets. In 2014 many commissioners and advisory delegates underspent their per diem allowances.

For most commissioners, the per diem will begin dinner on Friday, June 17 and end with lunch on Saturday. On Sunday, June 15, all assembly registrants will be encouraged to worship in area churches, which are graciously arranging for transportation as well as providing lunch. Hence, the amount for that lunch will be deducted from the per diem amount for that day.

History:
2014 (Detroit) $50
2012 (Pittsburgh) $47
2010 (Minneapolis) $45
2008 (San Jose) $45
2006 (Birmingham) $39
2004 (Richmond) $38
### Assembly Assistants

#### 222nd General Assembly (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridget Green</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Rhodes</td>
<td>Santa Rosa, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conrad Rocha</td>
<td>Albuquerque</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diane Barber</td>
<td>Minneapolis, MN</td>
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<td>Don Lincoln</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
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<td>Emily Anderson</td>
<td>Maryville, TN</td>
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<td>Freda Dye</td>
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<td>Glen Alberto Guenther</td>
<td>Madison, WI</td>
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<td>James Tse</td>
<td>New York City</td>
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<td>Jim Collie</td>
<td>Santa Fe</td>
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<td>Kathy Lueckert</td>
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<td>Kevin Porter</td>
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<td>Mary Gene Boteler</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
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<td>Rebecca Kirkpatrick</td>
<td>Bryn Mawr, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rick Nutt</td>
<td>New Concord, OH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Choi</td>
<td>Stewartsville, NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Yamaguchi</td>
<td>Pasadena, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamara Williams</td>
<td>Charlotte</td>
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</table>
When I speak as Moderator of the PCUSA, it is critical to understand my role. I have no authority. My role is to serve as interpreter of the past General Assembly and to be an Ambassador to the denomination. That is it!! And it is a privilege to serve in those ways.

Increasingly this year I have been aware of another role that is expected, though not stated, for the moderator. As many of you know, my primary mission these two years has been and continues to be “to listen and to love”. And I have been listening. Over and over I have had people say, “Listen to our pleas of concern for the church, and as Moderator, do something about them.”. But my “powers” are limited. I am not a bishop nor a Pope, nor do I want to be. All I have is a platform on which to stand and speak, and I continue to pray that God will allow me to use it wisely and appropriately as my love for this Church has only grown in these past months.

Today I wish to use that platform, and invite you to join me in responding to God’s call for the PCUSA. I also wish to share that this will be a priority for the remaining months of my Moderator term, and it may require that I alter some of my engagements across the church. I grieve that, but I feel called to be responsive to this matter.

It is in that context that I share the following.

Recently I called together a small task force of individuals to help focus on financial support in the area of Global Mission. This task force was comprised of two former moderators, two seminary presidents, two very successful business people who are also ordained PCUSA ministers, a staff member who works in the area of missions, and me. Everyone I asked agreed to serve with one exception, and that refusal was due to health reasons not lack of interest or support.

We began our conversation by trying to understand the current status of our Global Mission program, its financial condition, and if it was something where we could interject some ideas which might help forestall the crises of bringing home mission co workers from the field. I will confess to having a broader vision about the potential for our work, for I knew that other areas of our denomination’s work, including other areas in different agencies at the national level, and programs at the regional and local levels, were also dealing with major budget shortfalls. My hope was that if a model was developed for Global Missions it might be applicable in other arenas of the PCUSA.

What emerged was an amazing and unanimous redefinition of what we should do with our time together. Almost instantly there developed a sense of deep urgency. There was a feeling that the issues related to funding Global Missions in the PCUSA were much more intense than just what was happening in that program, and that a sincere and painful situation existed, wherein a sense of trust has been lost across our denomination, and needs to be restored. It was felt that we needed to explore these matters in depth and that I should announce a CALL TO THE CHURCH to help in
For Discussion

addressing them.

Mid-level judicatures, missions and ministries across the church, individual members, pastors, educators and financial donors, church administrators, staff and elected leaders of the national church share a common feeling that the current mission understanding as well as some of our organizational operatives are not working as they need to be, and that the need for reform is urgent. As Moderator I have had in depth conversations with people from every level of the church, and here are some of the major issues which I have identified as consistent responses:

A. There is a profound and rapid change in the world around us that has put the Church’s relevance in question in ways we have not seen in our lifetime.

B. Not having a permanent current CEO in our Presbyterian Mission Agency, and having a Stated Clerk who is not going to seek reelection, has offered us a Kairos moment, which is unique.

C. We are facing a crises of trust across the church. This is manifested in many ways but includes – departing congregations, confused members concerning who we are, struggling mid-councils, frustrated and anxious staff in our national offices, many of whom are wary and disillusioned, local sessions and financial supporters, and a membership that is uncertain as to who we are as a denomination.

D. Our theological institutions, who have provided a foundational element of our denomination historically, are also victims of this unrest and the “old models” of seminary education being handled in the ways of the past by the same deliverers is under scrutiny.

E. We must act to remedy some of these matters and we must do so with haste, as we do not have lots of time to discern and debate.

While this call necessarily involves many entities, it is important for congregations and members to know that they comprise the body of the PCUSA and it is with them in mind that this emphasis is being undertaken. I have heard the cries for denominational support in seeking God’s will as we move forward. Our national and middle judicatory staff members are trying to do what we have directed, in sacrificial ways. If we feel we need to go in different directions, it is up to us to direct them accordingly. As I have observed them closely this year, I find their passion and commitment to service is a gift and a strength as well as provides an incentive for others to become involved in our work. Now we need to rethink what we are asking of them, and each other, and act in a way that works for all of us, and where we affirm that God’s house, and Christ’s table, is large enough for all of us to participate as we seek to do the work of the Kingdom.

As we do this, we also need to support the missions and ministries of our church, and to encourage our leadership to think and implement creative ways forward.

So what can be done? And when is it needed?

This call to the Church does not provide the answer, but is more a naming of reality, a speaking of the truth in love, a call to change. And that my friends is part of what it
means to be a reforming church, a claim we should embrace. Are we listening to God’s call for us to do a new thing? And are we willing to risk the comfort and in some ways the traditions of our past in order to accept our place in a resurrected church?

Imagine the image of living in a house which has had many rooms added over the decades. To get from one place to another we have to go outside, walk up stairs, reenter, go downstairs, and go through other rooms to get where we want to be. This seems ridiculous, but as I have been listening, it seems consistent with what some believe is the current house we live in as a denomination. So we need to move. We need to sort through and decide what to retain what to give away. Many have said that it feels as though we are functioning with a structure and approach that was designed for a church 30 years ago, but is no longer relevant. It is time for us to awaken to the realities of who we are as a denomination in the 21st Century.

Obviously our denomination’s financial situation has been troubling for awhile in numbers of areas of the church. Many say it has reached a critical level and we need to address the base causes for this situation. When we ask people to support our efforts, we need to give them a good reason, with an agreed upon set of priorities and shared vision, as to who we are and what we are about as the PCUSA. And we don’t have that clearly defined.

So what now?

What might it mean for us to hit the reset button for a new church start? What might it mean for us to practice Sabbath, and engage in a spiritual discipline for the church in order to discern our way? Or better yet, might we instead have a time of Jubilee (Leviticus 25) – which includes offerings of forgiveness, a releasing of what we have held captive (our current way of “being” church) that we might celebrate Jubilee, the Sabbath of Sabbath practiced every 50 years? Can we find a way to affirm a theological basis for who we are and who we are to be, one that embraces our uniqueness and our differences, and in that context establish the priorities for the church? And once we settle on priorities, can we implement an organizational network that can help us carry it out?

To do this we need to avoid territoriality. This discussion needs to occur in all agencies and mission areas, personnel and governing bodies, advocacy groups, at all levels of the church and in all institutions of the church and even among all members.

And while a sense of restlessness, of urgency, is good - fear and anxiety is not. Our mission and ministries are crying out, our leaders and our donors are naming the issue, and feel it is essential that a resolution be found quickly. Whereas the mission, vision and structure of our denomination is determined by our General Assembly, we cannot wait until this upcoming Assembly to appoint a study committee to come back in two years with a recommendation that will take two years to implement. We cannot wait for four years to get this resolved. The need is immediate. Many groups have offered ideas and thoughts about what to do. We have overtures coming to this year’s General Assembly which address some areas related to these matters. They have been conscientiously addressed and brought forward, and have
For Discussion

helped to shed light on even broader issues which we are facing. We have various agencies, offices and governing bodies of the church who are seeking to do the same. But we need a broad based, overall, consistent understanding of how to proceed, and must do this with the involvement of our entire church.

Since any official changes about our priorities, our vision or mission as a denomination, or a structure to execute such mission must be decided by the General Assembly, it seems appropriate that the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly take on the first stage of this effort. They are charged with planning and implementing the Assembly’s work so it seems appropriate that they be the ones to start the process. Some group has to do it. COGA envisions the need to focus on this issue in a broad way, with essential networking and information gathering from other agencies and bodies of the denomination. But let me be candid. Some people feel that if we rely on one area of our denomination to take the lead in this process, they may be tempted to control the outcome so that their interests will be served. They feel the same way about any other agency. It is not a specific condemnation of COGA. Instead it is a general unrest with our organization. When the Committee on the General Assembly (COGA) discussed tackling this issue, they recognized that their position needed to be clear and that any bias or preferred outcome from them should not have any more influence than those of other bodies.

Suggested specific steps to take:

In order to try and help get this process rolling following are recommendations for how to move forward immediately:

1. Someone has to take a lead. I am asking that the denomination affirm and actively participate in the COGA process which is getting ready to be unveiled and which will undertake the massive task of assessing the church’s will (in accordance with God’s will) concerning who and what we need to be as a denomination. It has been my privilege to meet with representatives of that board in order to share what I have heard and learned. I am convinced they (and you) have been heard, and that they wish to hear more – not dictate a future outcome. I am asking that we trust this process unless, as it is implemented, we find reason not to do so. I am also asking the other 5 Agencies of the Church through their executives and their boards, as well as all bodies of the church, to affirm this effort even knowing that it may bring about some dramatic suggested changes. Our denomination needs to trust that we can and will work together and not focus primarily on issues which divide us or protect turf. Let me add that there are other initiatives which are currently being brought forward by some of the other agencies. It is my hope that these might compliment the study I am suggesting be affirmed. One is a survey being undertaken by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board which is seeking to find ways to determine their future priorities. They are deliberately seeking ways to be faithful in response to the very challenging and upsetting issues which they have faced or addressed and to serve the church in ways that the church is wanting.
For Discussion

2. To ask church members, Middle Governing bodies, advocacy groups, Agency boards, local sessions, institutional members, people who have felt disenfranchised, people from different theological positions and different cultural and racial backgrounds, staff members at the local and national levels, and all others who care about our denomination to participate expeditiously in order that we might gather data which can help our Portland General Assembly next June to make informed and healthy decisions about our future.

3. To participate in a series of “Moderator Chats” (these won’t be fireside – maybe they should occur around a communion table – or the Baptismal font?). I propose that we have scheduled talk back sessions with me, and possibly some other people in leadership positions in the church, where various groups of our denomination will be able to share visions, ideas and hopes so that we might rebuild trust and move forward. Groups should include but not be limited to NEXT Church, The Covenant Network, The Fellowship Community, Middle Governing board staff, Advocacy groups, National staff members, agency boards, pastors, Christian Educators, Church Administrators, representatives from publications, and the list goes on. They should also represent the extraordinary diversity which is becoming an increasing part of our identity, and not be the voice only of the privileged who have comprised the majority of membership in our denomination for years. These will be open conversations, meaning that even if they are focused on some particular group, others may listen in, and we will seek ways to have their issues and concerns raised as conversations ensue.

4. To help sponsor and participate in regional gatherings with commissioners elected to the 222nd General Assembly, and other interested Presbyterians, concerning ways to prioritize our work and how to begin to develop our priorities as well as begin a process to develop an organizational system for the reformed PCUSA which is both feasible and adequate. We must realize that we are no longer a denomination of 5 million members but 1.7 million instead. Our resources are dramatically different than they were just a few years ago. Yet too many of us expect our denomination to operate in the same manner. That is both unrealistic and unfair to those who serve us.

As I said earlier, I do not have any authority to dictate how this process occurs. Actually I don’t have the authority to call for this action. Some who hear of this Call may feel I am overstepping my bounds. And they would be right. But I do believe firmly that we need to act, and to act NOW and believe that the platform afforded the Moderator affirms, or even demands, that I extend this call and challenge. We must make immediate decisions which will allow the 222nd Assembly In Portland to be able to deal realistically with many of the issues before us so they can act, not just appoint study commissions or refer this to ongoing committees. From all across the Church our membership has told me we do not have that luxury.

So let us step out in faith. Let us find ways to move this effort forward. Let us realize that if we make some decisions that don’t work as we had hoped, we can change them. It is part of our governing process to make changes and to alter direction when we believe it is important. But let us not act as the “frozen chosen” and sit still and complain or opt
For Discussion

out of participation. God is calling us to action. Do you hear? Can you join in? Whatever avenue is chosen to advance this effort, the honest fact remains that it must happen. And the time is now.

May God guide us all, as well as the Church, which we, and God, love.
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. G-2.1101

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Book of Order calls for the General Assembly to approve national certifying bodies in order for those individuals achieving certification to be recognized in the church. The Office of the General Assembly has developed this application process for organizations wishing to be recognized as national certifying bodies.

Approved National Certifying Bodies are approved for the period of time starting at the close of the General Assembly where the approving action was taken to the close of the next General Assembly. These organizations must apply every two years (for consideration at the biennial General Assemblies) to maintain their status as an approved National Certifying Body.

Applications are due to the Office of the General Assembly by the 180 day deadline prior to next General Assembly. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will review the applications and transmit appropriate applications to the General Assembly for action.

Please address any questions to: Ordered Ministries and Certification Office of the General Assembly Presbyterian Church (USA) 100 Witherspoon Street Louisville KY 40202-1396 kerry.rice@pcusa.org 502.569.5412 or 888.728.7228 x5412

1. Organization Information:
   a. Organization’s name
   b. Organization’s address
   c. Organizational status (check all that apply):
      □ not-for-profit organization □ membership organization
      □ group/committee/unincorporated association
   d. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) only or ecumenical association?

2. Organization’s Primary Contact/Information:
   a. Name of primary contact
   b. Organizational role of primary contact
Application to be Recognized
National Certifying Body
222nd General Assembly (2016)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

c. Term of office (if appropriate)
d. Mailing address of primary contact
e. E-mail address of primary contact
f. Phone numbers of primary contact

3. Narrative:
   a. What certification(s) does your organization oversee? What church workers benefit most from your certification program(s)?
   b. How does your organization’s certification process support the life and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)? If your organization is ecumenical, how does the certification specifically prepare those seeking certification for service in the PC(USA)?
   c. Brief History of Organization and Certification Process
d. To what “appropriate General Assembly body” do you propose transmitting “names of those who have earned certification,” so that the body may “forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor?” (G-2.1101) Why do you propose the body that you do?

4. Required Attachments:
   a. Certification Standards/Manual
   b. Report on those within the PC(USA) certified since the last General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Please list each person by name and presbytery, as well as the numbers for each of the following categories:
      i. racial ethnic status
      ii. age range
      iii. ability status (persons with disabilities)
      iv. [sex or gender]
   c. Six year history of those seeking certification and achieving certification (if applicable)
d. Organization leadership roster, including roles and denominational membership
e. Key organizational documents, including by-laws (if applicable)
For Discussion:

**Draft Application to be Approved as National Certifying Body**

**Responses from “Legacy” Certifying Bodies**

**Administrative Professionals Association**
The Executive Board has reviewed the document, and it looks really good. It makes me feel good, personally, to know that all the requirements listed are already in hand at APA!

Thanks for keeping the organization in the loop as this goes forward. It is an exciting time for certified personnel.

Blessings,
Rennie
Rennie Rhodes
Administrative Personnel Association
National President

**Educator Certification Committee**
The ECC discussed the form online and at its online meeting Thursday night and even took a stab at trying to complete it. On the whole the consensus seemed to be that the form seems adequate for the rather narrow but multifaceted purpose it is designed to meet. They really had no suggestions for improving the form itself. We did note that our intake information for educators does not include some of the data that the form requests (e.g. racial/ethnic descriptors), and so submission of the form would likely lack that data, at least initially.

Most of the conversation was around process. There was some question about why the ECC as part of OGA and as a body elected by GA every two years would need to apply to do what it was designed by the denomination and elected to do. I think, in general, the language of application/reapplication didn’t sit well, as it implied that there was a bi-annual possibility that the ECC would not be approved for the task for which it was constituted and elected. I suggested perhaps an altered process for reapplication which took the form more of a report or update than appearing to have to justify our existence. There was also concern about just getting the statistical data, given that it lives in a database that only Martha (among the ECC, at least) can access and perhaps with some difficulty for this kind of report.

I do think, however, that COGA should consider the rather unique historical, organizational, and constitutional standing of the ECC with reference to this process.

Thank you for including us in reviewing this documents and process!

Peace,
Craig

**Craig Foster**
Moderator
Educator Certification Committee
For Discussion:

Draft Application to be Approved as National Certifying Body

Responses from “Legacy” Certifying Bodies

Presbyterian Association of Musicians

Thanks for soliciting input from PAM on defining this process. I distributed the Certifying Organization Application questions to my Executive Board for their comments. We are pleased that COGA is looking at ways to formalize the process of recognizing certifying organizations and, by extension, certified individuals within the church. In general, the response to the application questions was very positive. PAM’s process is well defined, and most of the information contemplated in the application is easily obtainable and collectible. A couple of questions/comments emerged from the conversation:

1. Is an every two year cycle of recognition necessary? If there are no changes in an organization’s program, would the submission of an updated list of currently certified individuals meet the General Assembly’s need for oversight? Would a four year (every other GA cycle) be just as effective? The current PMA cycle for review and renewal of Missional Partnerships is every 5 years. Of course, should an organization make significant changes in its program, it makes sense that a full review and renewal would be in order at that time.

2. We do not ask individuals applying for certification for information on age, ethnic identity, race, or disability status. As such, we do not know this information on persons currently holding PAM certification. Individuals pursuing certification self-select and enter the process of their own volition. We make information about certification available on our website and publications, but we do not recruit or pre-select individuals for admission into the process. Since classifications such as those mentioned in the application draft have no bearing on a person’s ability to complete our process and are not considered in the evaluation process, questions about those identifications seem extraneous and potentially problematic. As in employment consideration, we do not want to know that information as we evaluate application packets. We do require persons holding certification to submit information on continuing education activities on a five year cycle. We have a provision in our certification guidelines that allows persons who identify themselves as retired to maintain certification into retirement without going through the renewal process. However, we do not define the age at which retirement happens.

Thanks for the opportunity to respond to COGA on this proposed process. I look forward to further conversations. Please let me know if further information or clarification would be helpful.

Thanks,

Bill
William McConnell, DMA
Executive Director
Presbyterian Association of Musicians

Presbyterian Church Business Administrators Association (National Association of Church Business Administrators or “The Church Network”)
For Discussion:

**Draft Application to be Approved as National Certifying Body**

**Responses from “Legacy” Certifying Bodies**

Draft was sent to PCBAA President, Jim Hugan of First Presbyterian Church of Flint, Michigan, but no response was received.
Application to be Recognized

National Certifying Body

222nd General Assembly (2016)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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G-2.1101

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Applications are due to the Office of the General Assembly by January 15, 2016 the 180 day deadline prior to next General Assembly. The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly will review the applications and transmit appropriate applications to the General Assembly for action.

Please address any questions to: Ordered Ministries and Certification
Office of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (USA)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville KY 40202-1396
kerry.rice@pcusa.org
502.569.5412 or 888.728.7228 x5412

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   d. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) only or ecumenical association?
Application to be Recognized
National Certifying Body
222nd General Assembly (2016)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

2. Organization’s Primary Contact/Information:
   a. Name of primary contact
   b. Organizational role of primary contact
   c. Term of office (if appropriate)
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   e. E-mail address of primary contact
   f. Phone numbers of primary contact

3. Narrative:
   a. What certification(s) does your organization oversee? What church workers benefit most from your certification program(s)?
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      iv. [sex or gender]
   c. Six year history of those seeking certification and achieving certification (if applicable)
   d. Organization leadership roster, with contact information, including roles and denominational membership
   e. Key organizational documents, including by-laws (if applicable), articles of incorporation (if applicable), and annual budget and other appropriate financial documents.
Report of the Task Force on Certification of Christian Educators

The Task Group studying the future of educator certification in the PC(USA) would like to thank the Committee on the Office of General Assembly (COGA) for the opportunity to study and meet about this important issue. Your generosity made possible an intensive yet productive face-to-face session in Richmond, Virginia on July 21st-23rd, as well as several online conversations. The Task Group was charged with the following:

- Examine the current process for certification
- Consult with various constituencies to determine the trends related to certification and to determine its future viability for ministry of the whole church
- Develop a recommendation for COGA’s consideration, at its fall 2015 meeting regarding the future of certification, including timeline and any changes to the constitution, COGA’s manual of operations, or other relevant documents

Our time together has produced the following statement and recommendations.

The Task Group affirms the centrality of teaching in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) undertaken by all those who serve in educational ministry including Certified Christian Educators and Teaching Elders. The Reformed Tradition has always raised up the importance of educated leaders going back to the era of John Calvin and other reformers. We acknowledge that the nature of Christian Education today is changing in churches and that there are fewer educators seeking certification for a variety of reasons including decreased employment opportunities, lack of continuing education funds, and the time commitment involved. The following statement from the current Handbook on Educator Certification demonstrates this awareness:

*Now, as we live into the twenty-first century, much has changed in the church and in the field of Christian Education but this does not mean that educational ministries in congregations have lessened in importance. In fact, it is critical that congregations have every opportunity for the very highest quality of educational ministry to insure that disciples of Christ will continue to be made now and in the future*

The loss of Certification would diminish the biblical and theological integrity associated with the church’s educational ministry, as there would be no standards in place to determine what a well-prepared Presbyterian educator needs to learn short of a Masters degree in Christian Education or its equivalent. Since fewer educators are seeking theological education and more are simply appointed, recruited, or hired from within the church membership or surrounding community, without Certification, the church does not have a framework to help those serving in educational ministry in the church to grow in their skills and knowledge to carry out the ministry their church has called them to do.

The existing purposes of certification were affirmed by the Task Group to address the needs of the larger group we are trying to meet. The purposes of this process as we see it are:

- To recognize and enhance the ministries of persons called to serve the church in educational ministries.
- To uphold denominational standards for the preparation and performance of those serving in educational ministries.
- To acknowledge and clarify the mutual accountability between the councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and those serving in educational ministries.
- To set specific achievable goals for the on-going development of those serving in educational ministries and to foster support for them as they pursue these goals.
The Task Group surveyed a wide array of stakeholders (including Presbyteries, local church leadership, Certified Christian Educators, seminary students, volunteers serving on the Educator Certification Committee, Certified Educators, members of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, and non-certified educators) with total responses of 1185. In helping us discern the future of educator certification, 74% of respondents said that it was important to be certified through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). On the key question of the survey, “Which statement(s) best reflects your recommendation for the future of Certification of Christian educators in the PC(USA)?” the largest percentage, 40.5%, recommended an increase in support for Certification at the national level of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to show that certification of Christian educators is of value to the church. On this same question 32% recommended that an organization like APCE should be charged with certification rather than the denomination and 11% recommended maintaining certification as it currently stands with no additional support from the denomination. It was evident from the comments on this key question that many were torn between these three options moving into the future. Some of the comments to the Task Group in the survey indicated difficulties or resistance to the exam process, frustration by the lack of care and acknowledgement offered to Certified Christian Educators by Presbyteries and sometimes their congregations of service. Some asked for more availability of courses including online offerings. Others showed a lack of knowledge or understanding about the nature of certification and why it might be needed.

Therefore, the Task Group recommends the following:

For referral to Presbyteries
1. That Certified Christian Educators are tracked at the Presbytery level, requesting the names and contact information of Certified Christian Educators on the annual Stated Clerk’s report much as the same is requested of Teaching Elders.
2. That Presbyteries be encouraged to explore the relationship of training between Commissioned Ruling Elders and Certified Christian Educators. There is an overlap of needed knowledge such as biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, Presbyterian polity, and faith development that may make these courses mutually beneficial to both groups.

For referral to the Educator Certification Committee
1. That a portfolio process of assessment be put in place as an alternative to an examination in order to fulfill the competencies as listed in the Book of Order. In recognition of differing ways of learning and to offer more flexibility, a variety of assessment instruments would be provided as evidence of competencies. This portfolio would also be shared with the Presbytery as an introduction of the Candidate for Certification to the Committee on Ministry in whose bounds they labor.
2. That a more active system of personal contact be developed in partnership with the Certification Advisors so that the Candidates for Certification will receive ongoing support, guidance, and encouragement during the process.
3. That continued partnerships with seminaries and other course providers be nurtured to increase the number of hybrid and online opportunities at an affordable price.

For referral to the Office of Ordered Ministries and Certification
1. That the denomination through its communication channels (Presbyterians Today, social media presence, Presbyterian News Service, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) website, etc…) should develop and implement a communication plan to effectively inform local congregations regarding the values of and processes for educator certification.
2. That representatives from the Educator Certification Committee have a conversation with Presbytery leadership and Stated Clerks about strengthening their relationship with Certified Christian Educators and Candidates for Certification. (i.e. Fall Polity Conference, site visits, etc.)
3. Also, that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) invest in a method that would allow for self reporting of changes in contact information on the denominational website dedicated to Christian Educators. (www.pcusa.org/christianeducators)

For the consideration of the Committee on the Office of General Assembly (COGA)

1. That COGA overture the 222nd General Assembly (2016) to create a Special Committee to Study the Reformed Perspective of Christian Education in the 21st Century to report to the 224th General Assembly (2020). The task group recommends that the work of this committee include

   a. Assessing the historic roles Christian Education and Certified Christian Educators have played in the formation of faithful followers of Jesus Christ in the Presbyterian church and determine how our common history informs the future of educational ministry in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),

   b. Examining the current state of the Christian Education not only in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but also ecumenically, while exploring means by which to lift up and strengthen the educational ministries of congregations and councils of the church,

   c. Investigating how persons engaged in educational ministry, paid and volunteer, can offer themselves as resources to the denomination,

   d. Studying current trends in employment of Christian educators within the congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to determine whether there needs to be any changes in the present certification process, so as to make the certification process more accessible to persons, paid and volunteer, serving in educational ministry in congregations and councils of the church,

   e. Partnering with racial ethnic caucuses and gatherings of small membership congregations to explore how resources and certification in the PC(USA) can be reflective of the diversity in the Church,

   f. And exploring means of creating awareness and increasing value in the field of Christian Education while helping the entire Church think critically and faithfully about the necessity for Christian Education in our ever-evolving reality.
For Discussion:

Proposed Meeting Schedule  
Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA)

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<tr>
<th><strong>2016 Meeting Dates:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>February 3-5, 2016</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
<td>Feb 3 - COGA meets with PMA Board Exec. Comm.</td>
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<td>Feb 4-5, COGA Meeting</td>
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<td>February 19, 2016</td>
<td><strong>120-Day Deadline</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 18-25, 2016</td>
<td><strong>222nd General Assembly</strong></td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 24-26, 2016</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>2017 Meeting Dates</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>March 6-8, 2017</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 23-25, 2017</td>
<td>Louisville, KY</td>
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