

Notes from PCUSA General Assembly
Salt Lake City, Utah
June 29 – July 4, 2024
By Commissioner John Ey, Ruling Elder

Being a Commissioner to the General Assembly (GA) has been on my “bucket list” for many years. When I share that sentiment with friends, I often get a blank stare in return! However, as a lifelong Presbyterian and formerly a Clerk of Session for ten years, I just love to know how the PCUSA gets things done. It was my honor to represent the Presbytery of the Miami Valley in Salt Lake City last month.

You can find excellent summaries of the actions of the GA from several sources, including the [Presbyterian Outlook](#). My report will focus more on the nuts and bolts of the assembly than the actions.

First of all, the election of co-moderators (which seems to have become the standard at about the same time that we started having biennial GA’s in 2006) happened on the first day of GA and the new moderators presided over the meeting immediately! It was an impressive display of immediate parliamentary skills by Rev. CeCe Armstrong and the Rev. Tony Larson, both from South Carolina. In recognition of this difficult transition from commissioner to moderator, the GA decided that the 2026 election of moderator would be at the end of the assembly instead of the beginning. So, Rev. Armstrong and Rev. Larson get to moderate two GA’s!

I served on the Christian Formation Committee which met for three days by Zoom during the week before GA. I liked the remote committee meeting format as it reduced the time away from home by several days and gave me many new acquaintances from across the country to look for during the GA plenary sessions. “Plenary” was a new term to me that simply means meeting as the whole body or simply the general assembly. Also, the remote committee format saved the PCUSA over one million dollars in expenses.

Having the knowledge of how our committee worked through the issues in the Zoom sessions brings me to the key take-away that I got from the GA. Simply put, we should trust the committees! Often commissioners would make statements as we were discussing the pro’s and con’s of an issue that were clearly considered by the committees. To me, this only served to extend the debate time which at times was very long!

I was very impressed with the technology and support provided at the GA. Also, the PCUSA administrative folks were amazing. Ian Hall, CFO of PCUSA, could respond almost immediately to any tweak to a proposal with the financial impact both in dollar terms and in the impact to the per-capita. He was treated like a rock star by the commissioners.

Finally, I want to thank Rev. Cliff Haddox (TE) and Olivia Collins (YAAD) who sat with me during the entire GA. It was fun to spend time with my PMV commissioners.

John Ey

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By – Commissioner Cliff Haddox, MWS

When I had first been approached about being a commissioner to the 226th General Assembly I was at first a little shocked. I knew there were many in our Presbytery that were qualified to fill the role. But after the initial surprise wore off I agreed and began to prayerfully prepare for what lay ahead in Zoom meetings and Salt Lake City.

I thought back a great deal on what my experience had been in the church in relation to the General Assembly. I had attended the opening worship once. My wife had been a YAAD. And I watched the streams of the meeting in recent years. I have always been fascinated with church governance and am a bit of a polity nerd. Yes, I am that guy who enjoys parliamentary procedure and presbytery meetings. I have always marveled at the connection we had to the larger church through such events and governing opportunities.

I have often found myself at odds with those who spoke of GA as if it was some kind of “other” entity that wasn’t representing the church when it voted ways they didn’t agree with. In my time at a previous call I fielded questions about “How could they vote that way?” And listened as folks said that they had to leave the denomination because of what “They” did. I did my best to remind them that the “they” was made up of “them”. This was not always well received.

Now I was going to be part of that process at that gathering. I connected with folks online who would be there. I found out about old classmates from seminary as well as colleagues from other areas of ministry over the past 20 years who would be there and soon was involved in discussions and hopeful prayers for what was to come.

The Zoom experience wasn’t as ideal as one would hope for for the committee meetings but it was still more efficient than what one would expect from a zoom meeting of over 50 people. The business had delays and the voting system did crash as we all put it to the test but considering it was proprietary software I was patient and understanding. I served on the environmental committee and as a show of how sticky policy can be we moved items to vote on the floor that would bump heads but it was the nature of what we dealt with.

Soon all our overtures and ourselves were in Salt Lake City. The atmosphere and optimism for our church was tangible. As folks got to know each other on the opening night I got to check in with my friend CeCe Armstrong who was standing for Co-Moderator. I smiled at the connections visible and would be even more thrilled when CeCe and Anthony Larson would win the vote. Then it was on to the business. The days of votes, debate, and discussion were long. There were times the tech broke down, there were times we broke down. But there were times we danced and times we sang. There were details hashed out and catching up with folks over lunch and late evening talks and receptions. Once it was all done I had a grand appreciation for all that goes into making the sausage of church governance including all the financial implications of the decisions we made along the way.

For myself that was a special moment. The church I served before coming to Dayton was a church that decided to leave the PCUSA over the passing of 10A, a move to make our church more inclusive. I did not leave with them. It was a painful time as my family and I regrouped, short-sold a house, and entered a time that we had to lie fallow to eventually rebuild as we have here. Fast forward to this year's General Assembly, where I got to vote on issues to further shore up those protections that I stood for all those years ago. As the vote passed it was a piece of closure on a very heavy scar on my heart. I feel I'm a better Presbyterian and a better Christian from my time at the General Assembly. Thank you for voting to send me to the "Room where it Happens".

Yours in Christ
Rev. Cliff Haddox
TEC-Miami Valley Presbytery 226th General Assembly

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By – YAAD Olivia Collins

The 226th General Assembly in Salt Lake City happened from June 26-July 4th, 2024. During this trip, I was given the opportunity to serve as a Young Adult Advisory Delegate.

Throughout the General Assembly, there was an incredible amount of passion for both the people and the politics of the church. A combination of both allowed for very fruitful discussion and addressed tough topics.

Over June 25th-June 27th, I was a committee member in the International Engagement Committee. In this committee we had several different discussions regarding "Supporting the people of Guatemala", Using the Gospel of Love in Humanitarian Efforts, Confessing our complicity of Christian Zionism, "Educational Resources to end "Israeli Apartheid" and Reaching Out in Concern for the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba and the People of Cuba."

During the online committee portion, discussion lasted from about 10am-8pm each day. The main items of business discussion were from INT 06, INT 05, and INT 05. The discussion from these items of business were at times very tense, not necessarily about the overall content, rather the phrasing of some of the language within. All of the items of business had nuances that could dramatically change the meaning of the sentence.

The INT Committee held standards high with how we wanted the language since we wanted to be inclusive. All of the hard work paid off and we left an online committee with five items of business to take to the floor of the General Assembly.

The Items of Business are as follows:

[INT-01] On Support of the People of Guatemala

[INT-08] CR-05 On Reaching Out in Concern for the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Cuba and the People of Cuba
[INT-06] Educational Resources for Seeking Ways to End Israeli Apartheid
[INT-05] On Confessing our Complicity in Christian Zionism
[INT-02] That the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Utilize the Gospel of Love as a Guiding Principle in its Advocacy and Humanitarian Efforts

On the floor of the General Assembly, there was even more passion showcased than on the Zoom committee meetings. On the floor, the main item of business we spent hours on was discussing ENV-01. In the end, the General Assembly got through all business. It was an incredible and an extremely rewarding experience.

As a Young Adult Advisory Delegate, I was able to expand my connections with people in the PCUSA. I was able to attend a worship service at First Presbyterian Ogden. Surrounded by mountains, a community garden and very accomplished individuals within the PCUSA, I knew that God had put me in this place. I had the opportunity to connect with individuals who went to several different Seminaries that encouraged me to attend. From Princeton Theological, to Pittsburgh to Columbia, I felt so seen. As I look into attending seminary within the next few years, I was given advice to help guide me to what Seminary is meant for me. I felt incredibly blessed to talk with these individuals.

In regard to my fellow YAAD peers, I was able to connect with people from DC, to Florida and even Ohio! We all had similar paths and are planning to go into ministry. Pastor Ekima and Pastor Katrina were very helpful throughout the entire process of the General Assembly. They had meetings with us on Zoom in June for GA training, and were a joy to be around in person. They helped YAAD's understand what our jobs were as advisory delegates. This was such an incredible experience and I am forever grateful to have had this opportunity to serve as a Young Adult Advisory Delegate.

Olivia Collins, YAAD