

## **General Assembly Commissioners Report:**

This report is made to Yellowstone Presbytery from one of your commissioners to GA 225 which met in Louisville, KY June 17 to July 9, 2022.

My report is in 3 sections. The meeting as it affected me a lifelong Presbyterian, the affect the decisions made will have on us as Presbyterians, and the decisions we will be asked to make as a presbytery.

### **How the GA 224 affected me:**

I was happy to return to in-person meetings where I could mingle with other commissioners at mealtime and find out what was going on at their Presbyteries. We differ a lot in size, but one thing was consistent the role of being a church pastor has changed a lot due to the pandemic. Everything about being church required some rethinking and nothing had taught them in seminary about how to deal with this form of crisis. Being together in this place as a fellowship was very joyful for them and for me. While this was my 2<sup>nd</sup> time as a commissioner and 3<sup>rd</sup> time attending a GA, I still felt I was in a different church than mine in Montana.

The difference was reflected in the diversity of people I saw and worked with. Diverse races, cultures, and backgrounds. I saw a church with a rainbow of colorful people who had a deep spiritual love for Jesus and wanted the world to know how much this church wants to share the gifts of that spirit with everyone one regardless of their race, sexual identity, cultural background, or religious beliefs. A come on in we want you to feel welcome type of fellowship and a shared role of come join us as fellow sinners. The theme of "Lament & Hope" was very appropriate for these times.

So, what did we do that will define us a Presbyterian in the future?

### **What decisions did we make that will affect us as a body?**

Let me start by saying this church going forward will not in any way be the church you grew up with or think you belong to now. The work Jesus had cut out for us

to do is one of thinking outside the walls of our buildings and finding ways to engage in making real changes in our communities'. Matthew 25 churches are doing this now and that movement will be one of the many ways changes will occur. Another is the Cash Bail program initiated by this same movement. In our past membership was how we became a body with dues and privileges. The membership model is being replaced with participation as the key part of relationships regardless of church affiliation. We will become a church where there is a heart for service to people who feel the pain of being judged over their identity or race.

How this will take place will involve a review and writing of new additions to the "Book of Confessions". Documents and confessions will be reviewed, and a lot of research done so that this document reflects the new Presbyterian Church's beliefs regarding all who have been marginalized by the church in the past.

We will put aside the term Representative as a term used in governance elsewhere and have delegates and commissioners capable to make decisions for each body of the church, whether they are ordained or not. This means the church will recognize the importance of fellow human beings as made by God in His image and everyone needs to be included in making decisions in this fellowship.

The really hard part will be for the Presbyterian Church will be the impact of losing many in our fellowships who cannot abide by the changes that are coming from within and not able to see how the Holy Spirit is at work in those changes being made. We will "Lament & Hope" with them even as they seek a church home elsewhere.

### **What are the decisions the Presbytery of Yellowstone may be called upon to make?**

In the past because our Presbytery name is near the end of the alphabet by beginning with a "Y" we have not been able to have our voice heard when the voting of the Presbytery's is being recorded. This was not discussed or changed

so be prepared for this to happen again as the role of votes is taken.

Some of the Presbytery votes will be taken on the following BoO provisions:

G 2.1001 adding Commissioned Ruling Elder.

G 3.401 Synod participation.

G 3. 301 ( administrative)

G 3.0106 Big Debate and became part of another action. Issue for us will be adding another policy protecting people with disabilities.

G 2.0305 adding term "Immigrant Pastor"

G 2.2503 Deletes "Honorably Retired" and new wording will be "Retired".

The biggest vote will be on a complete rewrite of section "D" or the "Rules of Discipline" of the Book of Order. The entire section was redone, and this will need careful review of the JC for advice to the Presbytery before we vote, I assume. A later vote to reconsider this action was defeated so the action to rewrite stood.

The next thing decided was for the Presbytery to vote on adding a family leave policy to G 2.0804, the terms of call, with a mandatory 12- week leave being required. This 12-week policy was reviewed and not a part of a committee recommendation and added by amendment in the Plenary. A motion to reduce the required amount of time to 6 weeks failed to pass. This vote was one highly supported in committee when there was no specific time frame in the overture. I can assume this will be a tough decision for this Presbytery now that 12 weeks may be required of a vote in favor of the overture. The vote I recorded on this 12 week provision was 346 in favor to 33 opposed, so it had strong support at GA.

In general, the GA has added clarification to the role of CRE and you will see more possible uses for CRE's besides the current commissioning to Pastor in a single church. They also will be required to attend Boundary Training which all RE's will be encouraged to take who are in any paid position in the church.

The Merger of the PMA and A Corp was voted to proceed and a commission with all the powers needed to make the change will be formed. This meant the budget for OGA and all the supported activity on Per Capita funding changed which resulted in a net reduction in the projected per-capita amounts for 2023 and 2024. Per-capita for 2023 will be \$9.85 and for 2024 it will be \$9.80 per member. For 2022 it was \$8.98. So it is still an increase

The next GA will be in Salt Lake City and about as close as one can get. The next one will have in-person Plenary sessions before July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday and committees meeting in a staggered schedule a lot earlier than this year's meetings and all those will be via ZOOM.

I recommend more than just electing and commissioning delegates to General Assembly, that they receive training from the Presbytery on how to approach this important work and service. I spoke with many 1<sup>st</sup> time commissioners, and they were overwhelmed by the way work was being done and how hard it was to keep up because they were not prepared for what would be taking place. Very important decisions were being made and they felt they were making ill informed decisions. I do not mean to imply we need experienced commissioners only anyone elected to do this work needs a lot of help and commitment before going. The term of office of the commissioner runs until they are replaced so the sooner the selection takes place the better.

The presbytery was supposed to rewrite the selection policy for commissioners to GA. This remains to be done so applicants can know what they need to do to get elected to this important work.

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