Report on the 224th General Assembly of the PC(USA)

Teaching Elder Commissioner
Rev. Scott V. Cervas

The General Assembly was completely online this year, and was handled with great care by those who worked behind the scenes (or not so behind the scenes) to make sure things ran smoothly. I was impressed by the way were were able to conduct the business that we needed to complete with very few technical problems.

The Book of Order (BoO) does not allow for a GA that is not held in person, which means all of our work has to be ratified by the 225th General Assembly in 2022. Perhaps at that point, if it is possible for GA to meet in person, we will amend the BoO to allow for that in the future. Therefore, our business was limited to the things that needed to be done for the church to continue to function over the course of the next two years. Those included electing co-moderators, electing a stated clerk, and approving a budget.

It was not originally my intention to serve as a commissioner to GA this year. I was the alternate. I am grateful for your willingness to let me do so. It certainly was not the experience that GA normally is, but it was still nice to feel connected to people across the denomination for the short period of time we “gathered” on Zoom.

Scott

Date: June 30, 2020

From: Bill Reed, ruling elder commissioner to 224th General Assembly

1. I felt the GA went quite well technically, 700 folks on a Zoom meeting was impressive. It will be interesting to see if some of this technology will be incorporated into future GAs.

2. I think the co-moderator team of Bentley and Street-Stewart will be good, I voted for them, I would be happy for them to visit Transy.

3. At least on the surface the denomination has a real commitment to diversity and inclusion, the number of Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Native-Americans involved in various points of the meeting was impressive.

4. The controversy over SFTS and Univ of the Redlands seemed likely to consume a lot of time, until the co-moderators made the statement that they were going to get the parties in the same room, perhaps with a professional mediator, to work things out. That was fine with me.

5. I was surprised that the Board of Pensions and the Foundation were sort of invisible.

6. I wish there had been a little more detailed article in the Outlook or PNS about pending matters, even though the matters we considered were, for the most part, uncontroversial.

7. The last minute attempt to propose a commission to examine the rights of the preborn struck me as an attempt to create a talking point. It had no chance of passing, but some will be able to say "They would not even consider talking about pro-life issues." We will see if that happens.

8. One of the questions asked to confirm a quorum was "How would you describe your theological perspective – moderate, liberal, progressive, conservative, evangelical." Conservative and evangelical only got about 12% of the total. We used to talk about how a range of theological views was a strength of the PCUSA, that is becoming less true for better or for worse.

9. Finally, apparently many were disappointed that a statement about black women and girls was not considered. A statement approved by numerous former moderators has been circulated in recent days expressing regret. I am pretty ambivalent about whether it was a mistake or not.