

**KENTUCKY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**  
**73RD ANNUAL ASSEMBLY**  
**OCTOBER 22-23, 2020**  
**DELEGATE'S REPORT**

The 73rd Annual Assembly of the Kentucky Council of Churches was held on October 22-23, 2020. The Assembly was originally scheduled to be held in Morehead, Kentucky, but was moved to a “virtual” event due to Covid-19. Delegates from the KCC member judicatories (including Transylvania Presbytery), as well as other guests and visitors, “attended” the gathering.

The theme of this year’s Assembly was “The Golden Rule,” and was something of a deep-dive into that classic gospel text (Matthew 7:12). The program included keynote presentations by Jud Hendrix (Interfaith Paths to Peace) and Robert Welch (past president of the Council on Christian Unity), as well as a panel discussion featuring Louisville Seminary faculty Susan Garrett and Justin Reed. Terri Hord Owens (General Minister - Disciples of Christ) preached at the Assembly worship service. Workshops at the Assembly included explorations of the Golden Rule in the context of natural disasters, social justice, interfaith relations, and political activity.

Several awards were presented to organizations and individuals for significant work in response to the 2019 Assembly theme (“Reclaiming Jesus”) including: the late Father John Rausch for his work in Appalachia; the Black Church Coalition of the Bluegrass for its work meeting needs of persons in Central Kentucky; CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) of Lexington for its work advocating on behalf of children affected by abuse or neglect; Common Good for its work promoting individual and community development.

During the business meeting, KCC Executive Board officers for 2021 were elected including Amanda Groves (Disciples of Christ) as President, Dale Raines (United Church of Christ) as 1st Vice President, Linda Axon (Church Women United) as 2nd Vice President, Batavia Combs (African Methodist Episcopal-Zion) as Secretary, and Melissa Holland (Roman Catholic Diocese of Lexington) as Treasurer. The Council’s ongoing financial challenges were also discussed, including the importance of supporting the KCC as a voice for God’s justice in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

As a delegate representing Transylvania Presbytery, I found the assembly to be informative, challenging, and inspiring, and I came away with a new appreciation for the familiar (perhaps overly familiar) notion of “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Like all those present, I regretted being unable to share fellowship in person, but I was grateful for the efforts made to bring us together virtually, and on the whole, I think the KCC leadership did a very effective job.

The 74rd Annual Assembly, is “planned” for October 21-22, 2021, at First Christian Church, Hopkinsville. The assembly theme will be “Connecting Neighbors: God, Creation, and the Church.”

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael L. Ward

Kentucky Council of Churches Delegate Report  
Lawrence Monroe

As a delegate from the presbytery I enjoyed and felt blessed by the conference experience, in spite of the limitations of a ZOOM meeting. The topic of "The Golden Rule" was so right for this increasingly stressful time of Covid isolation, political polarization, and racial violence. All the speakers helped the diverse group of remote participants understand the complex history and meaning of the Rule. Friday afternoon's speaker, Dr. Peter Caprotto, outlined the history of the Rule and its relationship to the concept of empathy, as well as its strengths and limitations when put into practice. At the end of his Presentation Dr. Caprotto offered a challenge: What does it mean for faith leaders to practice political empathy in divisive times? That just as Jesus confronted political oppression with empathy (Luke 12: 49-53) it is an enduring pastoral political challenge today.

In her presentation titled "A Time of Remembrance, Reconciliation, and Hope", Rev. Terri Hord Owens expressed how the church must "stand up, speak up, and show up" to help lift up all who have suffered loss during this pandemic; that we should be inspired by scriptures expressing the promise of redemption in spite of a seemingly hopeless situation (Ps. 3:3); That we must value our neighbors as God does without putting them in a limited box. As Micah says, "make justice happen" (Micah 6:8).

The Friday morning panelists presented very helpful insights on the Golden Rule, Rev. Dr. Sue Parish from the New Testament perspective and Dr. Justin Read from the old. Rev. Dr. Parish compared Matthew's teaching with Luke's: Luke expresses the "Principle of Reciprocity" that one must give to others as God gives, not expecting any return or concern about the goodness or evil of the person; Matthew ties the Golden Rule to the whole law. Dr. Read referenced a number of passages from the Torah that expressed how the Israelites related to their Jewish neighbors in the nested family structures of Israel. He ended by looking at Leviticus 25:44-46 which deals with the sale of slaves, asking how we deal with this tension today?

Friday's keynote speaker, Dr. Robert Welch, challenged the group to love others unconditionally in spite of differences in beliefs or doctrine. He made reference to the "holy" codes of Leviticus that is a call to action toward oneness with God in terms of how we treat others; that the Jewish teaching in Jesus's day about relations with others was in the negative, that is, do not harm others if you don't want to be harmed. Jesus turned it around and called for positive action and expanded it to cover everyone. Dr. Welch reminded all that "we are God's ambassadors to the world.