



The Presbyview

General Assembly Report of the PCA

The 16th century reformer Martin Luther coined the Latin phrase, “*simul justus et peccator*,” which translates in English to “*at the same time justified and sinful*”. Luther said that these are the two states that the Christians possess simultaneously in Christ – sinful in the flesh but justified in Jesus. Recently I was reading a book about the church of Jesus Christ, and the author tweaked Luther’s phrase to say, “the church is *simul fantastic et frustrating*.” I think that is apt description of the church, and especially of the annual General Assembly that completed last week (June 24-28). Simultaneously wonderful seeing the church at work, while the process of doing such work can be quite taxing even for the most ardent Presbyterian.

For those who are unfamiliar with our church government, it has 3 distinct yet equal spheres of government - Session (governs on a local level; a single church), Presbyteries (regional level; several churches), and General Assembly (national level; all the churches). Each level of government is made up of elders that govern their area (or sphere) of the church, with checks and balances between each so as to remain accountable to one other. Usually Sessions meets monthly, the Presbytery meets quarterly, and the General Assembly meets annually. This year’s meeting was the 47th General Assembly, which met in Dallas Texas. This year there were approx. 1400 delegates (voting members) of Ruling & Teaching Elders.

My overall impression this year are very positive. Let me tell you how the Assembly operates and then give a few of the major highlights:

How the Assembly Operates

Our denomination from the inception has been conscientiously a “grassroots” denomination. That means that they have shied away from anything that assembles a pyramid (or bishopric) structure where the power is held at the top by a few and then dictated to the masses below. This is in part because of the denomination that we left (the PCUS in the 1970’s) had a delegated assembly - a few chosen people from each presbytery that represent that presbytery. These few spots became very political, and as a result the decisions at the assembly were seemingly skewed by those that were able to politically maneuver to attain such spots and vote along a party line. When the PCA was formed they wanted to take the delegated nature out of the Assembly. Therefore, in the PCA Assembly every teaching elder is permitted to be a voting member, along with two ruling elders from every church (sometimes more depending on the size of the congregation). This allows for almost everyone that is an elder that wants to go to come and have a vote. Not all teaching elders do go, and even fewer ruling elders come (which is a problem in my opinion), but none in this system can say that they aren’t allowed to come. As mentioned about 1400 delegates attended (approx. 3:1 teaching elder to ruling elder ratio). As you can imagine, this large of an assembly makes for doing efficient business difficult. However, through Robert’s Rules of Order and RAO’s (Rules of Assembly Operation) established by the denomination, business can be accomplished – just not overly quickly.

Business comes before the Assembly generally speaking by Presbyteries sending overtures to the General Assembly. This means that a Presbytery can ask the General Assembly to consider/change/look into almost anything that presbytery deems worthy. These can be small items such as changes to our Book of Church Order, to more major things such as clarity on issues facing the church. This year there was 48 overtures to the General Assembly. Let me give you two of the major items and their outcomes:

Membership in the National Evangelical Association

Our denomination has been a voting member of the National Evangelical Association (NAE), a quasi-political group that speaks to political and cultural items facing the Evangelical Church. The problem that many have with this association is what defines “evangelical” anymore, and do we really want to be a part of essentially a lobbying group in D.C.? Further complicating the matter is that the NAE has made some decisions and/or support matters that many in our denomination would question. As a result, many of the more conservative denominations have pulled their association. This year we voted on it, and the decision to remove ourselves from the NAE was defeated. We remain a member for now.

Sexuality and the Church

One of the topics with the most overtures (of a various nature) dealt with is what is the church to believe and how is the church to respond to the changing cultural views of sexuality. This is a hot-topic issue without a uniform opinion across the denomination. The assembly, however, made in my opinion three strong decisions that I think will be helpful. Two overtures that were approved were to commend two works that deal with the issue. The first is the *Nashville Statement: A Coalition for Biblical Sexuality*, which is 13 articles of affirmations and denial that put forth a biblical ethic and worldview in regard to sexuality.¹ The second was a study paper put out and approved by a sister denomination, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America.² Both of these documents are a clear statement of an issue that may not be culturally popular, but biblically accurate and important. The third overture was to form a study committee that will produce a document of our own that speaks to these issues. That committee will be formed this year and hopefully have a document ready for approval for next year’s Assembly.

Our Denominational Seminary

One of the more interesting and controversial overtures from the Assembly (sent up by our presbytery) was to essentially pull the endorsement of Covenant Seminary as the denominational seminary and allow it to be independent. Our denomination does not require that you attend Covenant, and there are many other fine theological institutions that many of our teaching elders go through that are not officially connected with the PCA. The overture was defeated quite soundly; however, I think that a proper signal was sent to Covenant Seminary that they are not indispensable and that they ought to represent the denomination as a whole. Few items over the last few years have been a bit troubling in the seminary, and I think this vote gave the seminary notice that those things do not go unnoticed.

As I reflect on the work of General Assembly, I generally come to the conclusion, which is I'm thankful to be Presbyterian. I believe we have a biblical form of church government that is good, yet not perfect because the men that govern within it are not perfect. But more days than not I am thankful for the connectionalism and collected wisdom that comes from having many at different levels of church government and not just a few. For this I rejoice. Be encouraged and continue to pray for your church and denomination.

¹ Nashville Statement - <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement/>

² RPCNA Contemporary Perspectives on Sexual Orientation http://www.pcahistory.org/topicalresources/sexuality/RPCNA_Study.pdf

July

Circle Meetings

Tuesday, July 9th – 10:00 A.M.

Love Circle - Will meet in the church parlor. Nursery is provided.

Tuesday, July 9th – 7:15 P.M.

Gentleness Circle - Will meet at the home of Page Whitfield.

Thursday, July 11th – 10:00 A.M.

Faithfulness Circle - Will meet in the church parlor.

Saturday, July 13th – 8:45 A.M.

Kindness Circle - Will meet in the fellowship hall.

Wednesday Night Fellowship

We will have our Wednesday Night Fellowship meal on the 4th Wednesday of July (July 24th)! The meal will begin at 5:30 p.m. See you there.

Missions Committee

The Missions Committee will meet Sunday, July 14th immediately following the evening worship service in the church conference room.

MEN OF THE COVENANT

The men of Smyrna Presbyterian Church will gather for our Bible study & a season of prayer on Saturday, July 20th at 8:30 a.m. Breakfast will be served.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

The Prayer Shawl Ministry will meet on Thursday, July 25th at 10:00 a.m. at the home of Theresa Hammond. We hope to see you there.

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

The men's Bible study will not meet during the month of July! Enjoy your summer break.

Greeter Schedule

July 7th

Church Wing— Julie Ramsey

School Wing— David & Gail Stallings

July 14th

Church Wing— Jim & Janice Pitts

School Wing— Smadja Hart

July 21st

Church Wing— Jill, Gina & Stella Fogarty

School Wing— Howard & Jean Campbell

July 28th

Church Wing— Chip & Sis Howell

School Wing— Devron Douglas

August 4th

Church Wing— Randy & Page Whitfield

School Wing— Rose Zang

August 11th

Church Wing— Dan & Donna Hall

School Wing— David & Gail Stallings

August 18th

Church Wing— Jill, Gina, & Stella Fogarty

School Wing— Howard & Jean Campbell

August 25th

Church Wing— Smadja Hart

School Wing— Crystal & Lucy Katrek

Nursery Schedule

We ask that all assigned nursery workers report at 10:30 a.m. to relieve choir members. Sign up sheets will be placed in the Narthex for volunteers for SS and Night Nursery coverage.

July 7th

Infant— Page Whitfield/Kelly Becker
 Toddler— Gail Stallings/Josh Stevenson
 2's & 3's—Amanda Stevenson/Grant Williams
 Extra—Spencer King
 Floater—Ella Becker
 Children's Church—Yetunde Fogarty/Lily Becker

July 14th

Infant— Jill Fogarty/Anh Phan
 Toddler— Meg King/Joy Douglas
 2's & 3's—Mary MacGregor/Rose Zang
 Extra—Max Thelen
 Floater—Stella Fogarty
 Children's Church—Micalya Clark/Gina Fogarty

July 21st

Infant— Jamie Hughes/Hortense Bediam
 Toddler— Evelyn Canup/Joy Douglas
 2's & 3's—Tansy Ridings/Brandon Soileau
 Extra— Andy Fogarty
 Floater—Eryn Ridings
 Children's Church—Kristin Soileau/Lucy Katrek

July 28th

Infant— Brittany Newland/Kelly Becker
 Toddler— Susan Holland/Dwight Thomas
 2's & 3's—Julie Ramsey/Scott Holland
 Extra— Wayne Hughes
 Floater—Stella Fogarty
 Children's Church—Ruth O'Neal/Grant Williams/Will Holland

WIC COUNCIL NOMINATIONS

A nominations committee is being formed to fill open roles on WIC Council for a new 2 year term beginning September 2019. Please prayerfully consider those who may be willing and able to serve in advancing SPC's Know, Grow, Show mission through our women's ministry. See any WIC Council member if additional information is needed.

July Birthdays

Happy Birthday to:

Paige Crooks	1
Mallory Zang	1
Joy Powell	2
Allie Thelen	4
Opal Landon	8
Jill Fogarty	8
Philip King	9
Brett Crompton	13
Lucy Katrek	14
Manny Hart	14
Becky Reumann	15
Trina Whitaker	17
Jill Kerns	18
Paul Thelen	21
Anh (Ton) Phan	23
Ben Phan	23
Wayne Haynes	27
Cora Fogarty	30



WIC NEWS & EVENTS

The WIC hosted the Daughters of the King Banquet, with Ashley Decker of C. S. Lewis Institute as the guest speaker. It was a lovely time of fellowship together. All the ladies were blessed by Ashley Decker's message and the food and décor were perfect! A big thank you to all who contributed. We are grateful to the Lord for the church community He has given us!

SAVE THE DATE:

SPC will host this year's fall PresWIC event on November 1st & 2nd. Both NW Presbytery and Atlanta Metro Presbyteries are invited to attend. More details to come!

July

2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4  6:00 p.m. Pig Roast Milberger's Home	5	6
 7 11:00 a.m. Worship Service & Communion 6:00 p.m. Evening Worship	8	9 10:00 a.m. Love Circle 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting 7:15 p.m. Gentleness Circle	10	11 10:00 a.m. Faithfulness Circle	12	13 8:45 a.m. Kindness Circle
14 11:00 a.m. Worship Service 6:00 p.m. Evening Worship 7:30 p.m. Mission Committee meeting	15	16	17	18 6:30 p.m. Deacon Meeting	19	20 8:30 a.m. Men of the Covenant
21 11:00 a.m. Worship Service 6:00 p.m. Evening Worship & Communion	22	23	24 5:30 p.m. Wednesday Night Meal	25 10:00 a.m. Prayer Shawl meeting	26	27
28 11:00 a.m. Worship Service 6:00 p.m. Evening Worship	29	30	31			