

Presbytery of Boston
E-Connection
July 15, 2010

Follow-up to General Assembly

Partners in ministry,

Our 219th General Assembly worked hard, with respect and resolution, to find common ground on issues that are controversial. It highlighted the strengths of our connectional and representational system, and I was proud of our commissioners, overture advocates, and the good work that was accomplished. There is much more to do as Presbyteries consider and eventually vote on the overtures. Our Moderator and Stated Clerk will present a schedule for studying and discerning God's way forward on these weighty issues. An assembly wrap-up will be posted on our website, and copies will be available at the July 26 Presbytery meeting at KCB in Brookline. Our GA Commissioners will provide written reports, and will be available to discuss the work of the assembly with you.

The newly updated PCUSA website provides lots of summaries of the joys and celebrations, and the challenging decisions that were made in the context of prayer and discernment. I shared some of my thoughts with you in my blog, and include below some reports and reflections from others. Let us know how we can help you and your congregation as together we seek to be refreshed by the streams of living water that flow from Christ, and out of the hearts of believers, that the world might be renewed and blessed with God's love.

Shalom,

Wayne

General Assembly Mission Wrap-Up

On the heels of the 219th General Assembly, the work of mission in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) carries on. God's presence was prominent throughout the Assembly as commissioners prayed, studied, debated, and worked through hundreds of items of the Church's business.



The theme of Growing Christ's Church Deep and Wide was evident throughout the assembly. Thousands of commissioners, advisory delegates, observers and other participants were inspired and encouraged by the stories of congregations growing in evangelism, discipleship, diversity, and servanthood. These and other stories of mission permeated the Assembly, and the commissioners voted unanimously to renew this call.

The launch of the [new website](#), [appreciation for the financial support of presbyteries](#) and numerous stories of how the GAMC is inspiring, equipping, and connecting Presbyterians for mission, made up the Council's presentation to the Assembly on the opening day.

Throughout the days that followed, participants had abundant opportunities to engage with the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

- [The Women of Faith breakfast on Sunday, July 4, honored four incredible women who have dedicated their lives to the service of Christ's Church.](#)
- [122 Young Adult Volunteers and seventeen Mission Co-workers were commissioned and sent out for service around the world.](#)
- [Mission workers retiring after 20+ years of service were honored at a beautiful reception Wednesday.](#)
- [The 30th anniversary of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program was celebrated at events and in the plenary hall.](#)
- [The new Persons of Color Network was announced as a vital tool to help us grow in](#)



on through interactive story stations about
ng, an invitation to deeper engagement with

There was much talk during the Assembly

about our changing world and its impact on our changing context for ministry. The commissioners thoughtfully and prayerfully took actions on the form of government, the confessions, Middle East study, [and many others](#). I commend to you [the letter](#) that moderator Cynthia Bolbach, Vice Moderator Landon Whitsitt, Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons and I have sent to the church, along with frequently asked questions about the Assembly's actions.

The Assembly was ably and tireless resourced by scores of General Assembly Mission Council staff. I am so very grateful to our staff as well as members of the GAMC who were a vital part of the assembly, serving in a variety of roles. We gave thanks for the leadership of Carol Adcock and celebrated the passing of the mantle to Mike Kruse.

Finally, it was my great honor to be confirmed for another four years of service as executive director of the General Assembly Mission Council.

The Assembly was marked by times of prayer throughout. In that same spirit, I pray for you in the weeks and months ahead. The church faces many challenges, and yet we know that in Christ, all things are possible. May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be yours in abundance.

With God's blessings,



[Actions on Middle East peace questions and answers](#)

**By General Assembly Communication Center
Office of the General Assembly**

MINNEAPOLIS —A summary of the 219th General Assembly's actions on Middle East peace issues:

What did the Assembly do?

The General Assembly approved a comprehensive report on the Middle East —its first since 1997. The paper calls for:

- An immediate cessation of all violence, whether perpetrated by Israelis or Palestinians;
- The reaffirmation of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders;
- The end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories;
- An immediate freeze on the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, and on the Israeli acquisition of Palestinian land and buildings in East Jerusalem; .
- And many other steps toward peace in the region.

The General Assembly also approved the report of the Mission Responsibility through Investment (MRTI) committee, which:

- Provides an update on all corporations that MRTI has engaged as a result of the 2004, 2006 and 2008 General Assemblies;
- Acknowledges that "Caterpillar has in many ways provided positive leadership to its community, its state, and the nation. It has donated considerable resources and equipment in support of local development and disaster relief at home and overseas. It has significantly improved workplace safety, acted aggressively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and pursued environmental conservation within its production processes. In recognition of these accomplishments, Caterpillar has been listed for seven consecutive years in the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index"; .
- Strongly denounces Caterpillar's continued profit-making from non-peaceful uses of a number of its products on the basis of Christian principles and as a matter of social witness;
- Calls upon Caterpillar to carefully review its involvement in obstacles to a just and lasting peace in Israel-Palestine, and to take affirmative steps to end its complicity in the violation of human rights.

What does this mean?

Coming into the 219th General Assembly (2010), few thought that agreement on issues relating to the Middle East would be possible. Diverse perspectives divided Presbyterians from each other, and from the Jewish community. However, during the committee deliberations and again in the plenary session, through God's grace, a place of broad consensus was found —common ground for continued peacemaking work in Israel/Palestine.

The General Assembly rejected immediate divestment from Caterpillar in favor of continued corporate engagement with Caterpillar and other companies profiting from the sale and use of their products for non-peaceful purposes and/or the violation of human rights.

What's next?

A Monitoring Group for the Middle East will be formed to assist the appropriate General Assembly Mission Council offices and the Middle East staff team in monitoring progress and guiding actions to ensure adequate implementation of policy directions approved by this General Assembly. MRTI will continue to engage Caterpillar, and other companies, in relation to particular actions whereby the company profits from "non-peaceful action" of their products.

Civil union and marriage issues questions and answers

by **General Assembly Communications Center**
Office of the General Assembly

MINNEAPOLIS —A summary of the 219th General Assembly's actions on issues of civil union and Christian marriage:

What did the General Assembly do? What has changed?

The General Assembly approved both the final report and the minority report of the Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage and ordered they be sent out for study by the wider church. The vote was 439 in favor, 208 against, with 6 abstentions. By this action (sending both reports for study) the Assembly maintained the definition of marriage as between "a man and a woman." With the action to send the reports for study, no change has occurred, or is pending.

What does it mean?

The special committee report provides descriptive material on the historical and theological aspects of marriage, as well as a look at current laws on same-gender partnerships and their children, and the place of same-gender covenanted relationships in the Christian community.

They commend to the church their covenant, "Those Whom God Has Joined, Let No One Separate" as a guide for Presbyterians to come together to discuss difficult issues when there is disagreement. The minority report, also approved for study by the Assembly, concludes that Scripture is clear that marriage is between a man and a woman only and does not support any kind of sexual behavior outside heterosexual marriage. The minority report also contains a covenant for the wider church to use.

What next?

The special committee report and the minority report will be prepared for distribution as one document to the wider church. By sending both reports to the wider church, it is the hope of the Assembly that Presbyterians will find helpful background information on civil unions and marriage, as well as material to help individuals and groups remain together as they work through these difficult issues.



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