

223rd General Assembly Report, St. Louis, MO
June 16-23, 2018

1. It was both an honor and pleasure to serve as a Teaching Elder Commissioner from Peace River Presbytery along with Charmaine Ponkratz (Ruling Elder Commissioner, Burnt Store), Wayne Largent (REC, Englewood), Rev. Bill Teng (TEC, Arcadia) and our presbytery Young Adult Advisory Delegate, Mariah Martin (Sarasota 1st).
2. We elected Co-Moderators: Vilmarie Oliviera—originally from Puerto Rico but now living in Miami and a Ruling Elder; and Rev. Cindy Kohlman, a presbytery executive from New England
3. I was assigned to the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee where our most substantive action was to approve Item 07-01, “On America’s Interfaith Context and the Church’s Challenge.” This overture, 1) Affirms the religiously diverse nature of U.S. society and calls us to express Christian love towards people of other religions; 2) Condemns religiously motivated violence, prejudice, discrimination and hate speech; 3) Affirms previous PC(USA) stances on ecumenical and interfaith relations (<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/3000009/business>)
 - a. In addition, the committee entertained many ecumenical and interfaith spokespersons who were guests of the General Assembly. Ours was the committee with the responsibility of formally hearing their greetings.
 - b. Our good, Peace River Presbytery friend, Rev. Ary Fernandez from Cuba was an ecumenical guest who addressed our committee, and he was also given the opportunity to address the entire General Assembly plenary.
4. There was a proposal to ask the Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) committee of the PCUSA to divest from fossil fuel companies in our denominational portfolio. The proposal failed on the floor of plenary in favor of continuing corporate engagement as stockholder in some of the fossil fuel corporations where our church has holdings.
5. Due to my role as Moderator of the PC(USA) Israel Palestine Mission Network, I also spent time in the Middle East Committee as it considered proposals for continued support of justice for Palestinians, which were all overwhelmingly approved by the plenary. This included:
 - a. Opposition to anti-BDS legislation in state legislatures and Congress
 - b. Advocating for the human rights of Palestinian citizens in Israel
 - c. Embracing ecumenical solidarity with Palestinian Christian organizations in Palestine.
 - d. Advocating dialogue with Jewish groups about the Israeli occupation of Palestine
 - e. Urging RE/MAX not to sell property in the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank
 - f. Denouncing the recent violence in Gaza towards unarmed Palestinian civilians by the Israeli military (This was a Commissioner’s Resolution of which I was the author).
6. G.A. Per Capita is increasing to \$8.95
7. The Way Forward Committee continues with its restructure of the PC(USA)
8. Two significant aspects about G.A.
 - a. In the opening worship we collected \$50K, and in a march to the St. Louis City Hall involving over 1000 assembly attendees, the PCUSA Stated Clerk, Rev. Dr. J Herbert Nelson, presented the money to an organization that raises money for people who have committed misdemeanors but are too poor to make bail.
 - b. The leadership of our denomination has become increasingly diverse compared to 10, 20, 30, etc. years ago and how this General Assembly was conducted reflected that diversity in very positive ways.

I thank you for the honor and privilege of serving the presbytery in this capacity.

Jeff DeYoe, TEC, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Fort Myers