

General Assembly 227 Report

What a ride that was the 227th General Assembly (GA). At times it was a roller coaster with plenty of ups and downs and twists and turns. Other times felt like a traffic jam - stalled by questions about the rules of the road (Roberts Rules that is). But somehow, we managed to cross the finish line together with a map for the next two years.

Here is a summary of items that might be of interest to our church.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

During the GA226 a great deal of discussion was had regarding PCUSA's stand on environmental issues and the investment of pension and foundation funds in fossil fuel companies. The floor discussion lasted for 8½ hours. During GA227 people with opposing views on how to address this issue were able to develop a way forward through the hard work of the committee. Discussions were held between advocates, Mission Responsibility Through Investment (MRTI) committee members and staff, and representatives from the Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Foundation, and Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program. The latter three entities are investors guided by recommendations from MRTI.

Specifically, the Climate Justice Committee:

- Voted to divest from and add ConocoPhillips and Duke Energy to the proscription list until their actions are in compliance with the General Assembly's established criteria.
- Calls for the orderly removal of investments from all companies whose primary business (more than 50% of annual profit) is based on the extraction, refinement, transport or sale of fossil fuels, with the goal of fully completing this divestment by 2030 or as soon thereafter as prudent management allows. Also prohibits initiating new investments in such companies.
- Creating an endowment fund to make grants for supporting greenhouse gas emission reduction and renewable energy transition as well as addressing harms suffered by marginalized communities. The purpose is to go beyond divestment and align our financial practices with our theological convictions.
- Approved the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) policy entitled "Intent, Effect, Haste: Ethical Guidance on Fossil Fuels. This link provides more information about the report: <https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001500>

GENDER AND SEXUALITY

As a member of the Advocacy Committee for Q+ Equity (ACQ+E) I am pleased to report that GA227 approved all of the initiatives we brought forward for approval. We worked with the Gender and Sexuality Justice Committee and saw the following measures approved:

- A biennial gathering of Q+ Presbyterians. This also included funding for establishing a Q+ presence in some of the many regular gatherings such as the Youth Triennium.

- The development of a marker or identifier that a church seeking to call a pastor can openly indicate that they are open to calling a teaching elder who identifies as Q+. This allows a candidate to know in advance if this calling is a good fit.
- The development of a voluntary church review of their openness and inclusivity. This measure would also include a bibliography of materials to aid in the growth and development of the church.
- Approved a measure stating support for access to healthcare for all transgender individuals.
- Approved the development of two comprehensive theological frameworks, the first of which addresses human sexuality and gender, and the second addressing the corollary relational dimensions such as marriage, power, accountability, consent, and family structures. These reports and policies will be developed by ACSWP in consultation with appropriate advisory and advocacy committees. The reports will be accompanied by study guides for congregational ministry.

The Constitutional Interpretation Committee addressed two items related to gender and sexuality:

- Rejected a call for establishing a special committee to evaluate the implementation of Amendments 24-A and 24-C approved by GA226 and ratified by a majority of the presbyteries. These amendments added sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of people who we will not discriminate against. This item was thoroughly discussed at GA226 and it was the opinion of the committee that this was a waste of time, energy, and resources. ACQ+E concurred with this opinion and was pleased to see it passed.
- Ruled “out of order” an attempt to require pastors to be monogamous. This was put forward as a means of disrupting the work of the General Assembly by a group called Presbyterians for the Kingdom. This group’s stated goal is to pull the PCUSA into conservative theology that would include removing acceptance of Q+ Presbyterians and restricting the role of women in the church. They created a great deal of disruption at the Assembly and especially among the Young Adult Advisory Delegates.

CUBA

The Reformed Identity Around the World Committee (RIW) recommended that GA227 call on the PCUSA’s advocacy offices press for an end to the U.S. embargo and sanctions on Cuba. The measure, which was approved by GA, expressed solidarity with our long-time partner the Iglesia Presbiteriana-Reformada en Cuba (IPRC). The church acknowledges the deepening humanitarian crisis being created by these U.S. measures.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

- The location of the next GA was approved. We will meet in San Juan, Puerto Rico for the 228th General Assembly. A measure to return to in-person assemblies was approved but limited to a single year – 2030. During this time staff is to make recommendations on future formats, frequency of assemblies, and the use of technology.
- Continued the work towards creating a new confession. It was originally to be presented to the GA this year but there were issues raised that will need to be studied.
- There was a great deal of controversy related to the Unifying Body’s actions resulting in major changes in PCUSA World Mission and the termination of a number of mission co-

workers. Leadership admitted that mistakes were made. As a result the GA will form a commission to review the decision making process and make recommendations for moving forward.

- The Reformed Identity in the United States Committee took stands against Christian nationalism and its impact on the church and the country. Christian nationalism was labelled as theological error and the committee repudiated the idea that the United States was founded as a Christian nation.
- The Racial Justice Committee approved the recommendations submitted in the “Final Report of the Special Committee on the PCUSA and Race.

For more complete reporting on all of the happenings at GA227 follow this link: <https://pres-outlook.org/category/current-affairs/>