



June 21, 2014

To the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The 221st General Assembly (2014) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adjourned today after a full week of discussion, debate, prayer and discernment. The week also was enveloped in worship, celebrations, fellowship and glory to God. The Assembly, anchored on the theme “Abound in Hope” (Romans 15:13), was a resounding confirmation that the PC(USA) is alive, well, and fully engaged in being faithful to God.

Tough issues were tackled and challenging decisions were made. These actions were not done lightly, and each commissioner and advisory delegate carefully and prayerfully worked in committee and as a full body in plenary. Now, over the next two years, members of the 221st Assembly and other leaders in the church will be about the business of interpreting and guiding people through the decisions made. We hope you, too, will be ambassadors for the Assembly’s work, and we offer ourselves and our colleagues as resources.

Now, some highlights:

Relating to the world

- The Assembly approved the “Educate a Child, Transform the World” campaign, recommended by the Presbyterian Mission Agency. This is a call on the whole church to join in a movement to provide quality education to 1 million children in the U.S. and around the world in the next four years – as a way to alleviate poverty.
- The Assembly approved a measure to divest from three corporations – Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard and Motorola Solutions – it believes are not in compliance with the church’s policy on socially responsible investing. The decision is a significant step in the denomination’s policy that says it should not profit from “non-peaceful pursuits.” This does not constitute divestment from Israel – the church maintains significant investments in companies that do business in Israel.

Relating to our communities

- The Assembly approved “The Interreligious Stance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).” This statement is the result of work by Presbyterians, Christians of other denominations, and representatives of many faith traditions to study how Presbyterians should best engage with people of different faiths.
- Recommendations that the PC(USA) advocate measures to prevent gun violence won resounding approval. The GA’s decision calls for such actions as the formation of support, healing and

advocacy groups for those who have experienced gun violence in their families; and opposition to “stand your ground” and other legislation that may entitle gun owners to shoot before taking alternative measures.

- The Assembly celebrated the nearly 250 new worshipping communities in more than 100 presbyteries that have been counted since the last General Assembly. Clearly this is a movement of the Holy Spirit, giving the promise of renewal and rebirth throughout the church.
- For nearly 200 years, the Presbyterian church has served as one of the greatest forces for mission in the world. In that spirit, the Assembly endorsed an initiative to encourage Presbyterians to go beyond the walls of their congregations and increase their engagement in service to their communities and the world. By “living missionally,” we are intentionally joining in God’s transformations of societal injustices by following Christ’s example of service through faith, hope, love, and witness.

Relating to each other

- The Assembly approved a recommendation to allow teaching elders pastoral discretion to perform “any such marriage they believe the Holy Spirit calls them to perform,” where legal by state law. The body also passed a recommendation to change language in the *Book of Order* to indicate that “marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman.” Our prayer is that together, through our covenant with one another, the PC(USA) can move forward on this issue in love and with respect.
- The Assembly overwhelmingly voted to add the Confession of Belhar to the PC(USA)’s *Book of Confessions*. The action must now be ratified by a majority of the presbyteries within the next year.

Specific language on all of the Assembly’s actions is available on PC-biz (www.pc-biz.org). *Assembly in Brief*, a more detailed compilation of the Assembly’s decisions, will be available for download next week at www.pcusa.org/ga221.

Jesus clearly tells us in John 13: 34, “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” Agape love for those in our world, in our communities, and for each other is essential in these days ahead. We don’t all agree, yet we must find paths to peace and reconciliation using the unconditional love of God as our guide.

Our charge to you now is to go forth with the actions of the 221st Assembly, living missionally as the church beyond walls, and engaging in the process of working together with churches in the task of reconciliation. We look forward to working with you.

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,



Ruling Elder Heath K. Rada
Moderator, 221st General Assembly (2014)



The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly



The Reverend Larissa Kwong Abazia
Vice Moderator, 221st General Assembly (2014)



Ruling Elder Linda Bryant Valentine
Executive Director, Presbyterian
Mission Agency