

Actions of the Forty-fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America

L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk

Greensboro, NC, Site of 45th General Assembly

The Forty-fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America met June 12-15 at the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center in Greensboro, NC, hosted by Piedmont Triad Presbytery. **Pastor Nathan E. Kline** served as chairman of the Host Committee. A total of 1,461 commissioners attended, including 1,151 Teaching Elders and 310 Ruling Elders representing 891 PCA churches from the United States and Canada. The theme of the Assembly was **“Come to the Table.”** **Preachers** for the three evening services were **Dr. George W. Robertson**, Retiring Moderator and Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Augusta, Georgia; **Dr. Irwyn Ince**, Pastor of City of Hope Church of Columbia, Maryland; and **Rev. Duke Kwon**, Pastor of Grace Meridian Hill PCA of Washington, D.C. The sacrament of communion was observed at the beginning and final worship services. In addition to hearing **progress reports** from the ten Assembly-level Committees and Agencies, the Assembly addressed several major reports including, the **Role of Women** in the PCA at the local church, Presbytery, and Assembly levels; **Racial Reconciliation**; and **Overtures** (requests from Presbyteries requesting the Assembly to act on specific issues).

Dr. Alexander Jun, Moderator

Two Ruling Elders were nominated for Moderator, **Dr. Alexander Jun** and Mr. John Bise. Dr. Jun was elected (664-453). Dr. Jun is a **Professor at Azusa Pacific University in California**. A native of Alexandria, Virginia, he and his wife of twenty years, Jenny, have two sons and a daughter. He received his Ph.D. in Education Administration and Policy from the University of Southern California. His wife is a Professor of Pharmacy at the Keck Graduate Institute. The entire family is composed of musicians, and they often perform together. He is a **Ruling Elder at the New Life Mission Presbyterian Church of Korean Southwest Presbytery**, where his family was part of the original core group. Dr. Jun is the first Korean-American Moderator of the PCA General Assembly. He serves on the *ad interim* **Committee on Racial Reconciliation**.

The Role of Women in the PCA

The study committee’s seven voting members are Irwyn Ince (chairman), Jeffrey Choi, Ligon Duncan, Kathy Keller, Mary Beth McGreevy, Bruce O’Neil, and Harry Reeder; and advisory members are Nikisha Alcindor, Leon Brown, Dan Doriani, Kimberly Jones, Lani Jones, and Roy Taylor. The committee’s sixty-three-page report had been posted online in advance of the Assembly. An Assembly-wide seminar was presented by the committee on Wednesday morning prior to their report. The Assembly took the following action on the nine recommendations of the committee.

1. “That Overture 3 from Westminster Presbytery . . . be answered in the negative.” **Adopted**
[Overture 3 requested the Assembly to dismiss the committee without hearing the report.]
2. “That Sessions, Presbyteries, and the General Assembly recognize that, from the founding of the PCA, there has been a variety of views and practices regarding the ways in which women may serve the Lord and the church within scriptural and constitutional parameters, without ordination, and that such mutual respect for said views and practices continues.” **Adopted**
3. “That Sessions, Presbyteries and the General Assembly strive to develop, recognize, and utilize the gifts, skills, knowledge, and wisdom of godly women in the local, regional and national church, and particularly consider overtures that would allow qualified women to serve on appropriate committees and agencies within the church.” **Adopted**
[This would require revision to portions of the *Book of Church Order* and the *Corporate Bylaws of the PCA*].

4. An amended recommendation “That Sessions, if possible, establish a diaconate of qualified ordained men.” **Adopted As Amended**
5. “That Sessions consider how to include non-ordained men and women in the worship of the church so as to maintain faithfulness to Scripture, as well as utilizing the gifts God has poured out to His entire church (see exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14:26 in Chapter Two).” **Adopted**
6. An amended recommendation “That sessions and Presbyteries select and appoint godly women and men of the congregation to assist the ordained diaconate.” **Adopted As Amended**
“That Presbyteries and the General Assembly consider an overture that would establish formally the right of Sessions, Presbyteries, and the General Assembly to establish the position of commissioned church worker within the PCA for qualified and gifted unordained men and women.” [A provision in a former edition of the BCO of the United Presbyterian Church]. **Adopted**
7. “That Sessions, Presbyteries and the General Assembly consider how they can affirm and include underprivileged and underrepresented women in the PCA.” **Adopted**
8. That the committee be dismissed with thanks. **Adopted**

Racial Reconciliation and Ethnic Diversity

The study committee’s seven voting members are Kevin Smith (chairman), Carl Ellis, Alexander Jun, Sean Lucas, Jonathan Seda, Richie Sessions, and Alex Shipman. Advisory members are Sylvester Brown, Otis Pickett, and Russ Whitfield. The issue of racial reconciliation is one that the PCA General Assembly and the General Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (which joined and was received into the PCA in 1982) have addressed in several actions over a period of years. With the history of slavery, segregation, and discrimination in the USA, and the increasing ethnic diversity of North America, racial reconciliation and the advance of the Gospel in that context have come to the fore. The committee is composed of men from various ethnic backgrounds. The committee had several tasks:

- Assess the current situation in the PCA concerning racial and ethnic reconciliation;
- Identify specific problems the PCA needs to address to promote racial reconciliation and ethnic diversity;
- Develop constructive guidelines and suggest concrete steps for the use of the PCA, including all Presbyteries and Sessions, in order to make progress toward the work of racial reconciliation.

In order to assess the current situation, the Assembly authorized the committee to engage Life Way (a research department of the Southern Baptist Convention). “The primary objective for [the] research study is to obtain a quantitative baseline measure of where the Presbyterian Church in America stands on racial reconciliation and to identify areas that need practical guidance that the Racial Reconciliation Study Committee can recommend to encourage progress. This would focus primarily at the local church level to understand the attitudes, desires, teaching, actions, and progress in discipling people of all ethnicities. A secondary objective would be to understand where the Assembly-level ministries are in terms of similar dimensions.”

During Assembly week, the committee presented four well attended seminars led by committee members on key issues relating to Racial Reconciliation and Ethnic Diversity. The Assembly approved continuing the committee for another year and approved a follow-up study in three years to assess the growth and progress of our denomination in biblical reconciliation in practice.

Contributions for Racial Reconciliation and Minority Theological Education

In 2016, the Assembly voted to establish a “**PCA Unity Fund**” via designated contributions to and administered by the Mission to North America Committee (MNA) to raise up future generations of African-American and other ethnic minority Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders.

Directions for Contributing to the Study Committee and PCA Unity Fund

Both the study committee and the PCA Unity Fund will be underwritten by designated contributions.

- Clearly designate the object of your gift.
- For the Study Committee on Racial Reconciliation or its research project, send gifts to: PCA Administrative Committee, 1700 N. Brown Road, Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043.
- For the PCA Unity Fund, send gifts to: Mission to North America, PO Box 890233, Charlotte, NC 28289-0233.

Progress Reports on Assembly-level Ministries

- The **Administrative Committee** reported that the 2018 General Assembly will be June 12-15, 2018, hosted by Metro Atlanta Presbytery. It will feature an Assembly that is one day shorter than previous Assemblies. North Texas Presbytery will host the 2019 Assembly in Dallas. Evangel Presbytery will host the 2020 Assembly in Birmingham. The AC did not propose any increases in Commissioner Registration Fees, the Minister's Annual Administrative Fee, the Presbytery Request for Host Committee Contribution, or the required contributions to the AC from other Committees and Agencies.
- **Covenant College** reported that CC has hired three new full-time professors. Five Professors have published books recently. The newly constructed Lucas Art Center has opened. Carter Hall, the main building on campus, is half-way through a four phase remodeling process. CC has been named among the top ten colleges in the Southeast again by two major publications.
- The **Committee on Discipleship Ministries** reported that the CDM Love Gift to Covenant College totaled over \$45,000. Over the last year CDM has conducted eight *Transformed* Conferences for women, with an attendance of over 4,300 women from 586 churches. CDM serves as a "niche publisher" for Bible study groups and PCA authors, providing 6-10 resources/year.
- **Covenant Theological Seminary** reported that *Hope for the Future*, a multi-year strategic plan and \$40 million capital campaign is underway to provide for more endowed student scholarships, more endowed professorships, an enhanced operational effectiveness, a relaunching of The Center for Leadership Formation, and an enhanced Field Education Program with a Church Planting Track.
- **Mission to North America** reported that forty-seven church planters and thirteen church planting interns were placed last year. MNA administers the PCA Unity Fund to raise up future generations of African-American and other ethnic minority Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders. The formation of the PCA's 86th Presbytery, Hills and Plains Presbytery, was approved.
- **Mission to the World** Coordinator Dr. Lloyd Kim urged us to pray that 1% of our adult members would become missionaries, which would more than quadruple our long-term missionary force. In preparation for that answer to prayer, MTW is creating regional hubs with PCA churches for mobilization, discipleship, and mentoring in cross-cultural ministry. The first two hubs will be in Southern California and St. Louis. New ministries have been started in Brussels, Belgium, and Bologna, Italy.
- **The PCA Foundation** reported that assets have increased from \$68.9 million to 86.7 million. The Foundation distributed or granted to ministry \$12.4 million in 2016, \$8.1 million to PCA causes and \$4.3 million to other Christian causes.
- **PCA Retirement Benefits, Inc.** reported that RBI President, Gary Campbell, is now cancer free after a battle with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia. Funds under management increased by 6.8%, with 6,800 retirement accounts. The Annual Relief Offering for widows was \$592,464. Monthly, short-term or emergency supplemental income assistance is also provided by RBI.
- **Reformed University Fellowship** changed the name of the national ministry from Reformed University Ministries to be more consistent with its local campus name. RUF ministers on 145

campuses and RUF-International on 12 campuses in the USA. Nine new campus ministries were launched last year and nine are slated for this year. Additionally, RUF has campus ministries in Peru, Greece, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Spain, Columbia, and the Ukraine.

- **Ridge Haven Conference Center** reported that 5,000 summer campers are expected, a ten-fold increase in the last seven years. Winter Camps and Special Camps are growing as well.

Overtures

Ordinarily an overture is a request from a Presbytery for the Assembly to take an action on a specific issue.

- Of the eighteen overtures referred by the Stated Clerk to the Overtures Committee, the OC recommended that nine be answered in the negative (Nos. 1, 4-6, 8-11, 17).
- One overture (Overture 2 from Calvary Presbytery to Give Full Constitutional Status to BCO Chapter 58 on Marriage) was deferred to the Forty-sixth General Assembly.
- Overture 15 from Pacific Northwest regarding BCO 43-1 on complaints during a judicial process was referred without prejudice back to the Presbytery.
- Among the Overtures approved were:
 - A revision of *Rules of Assembly Operations (RAO)* 7-3 c, stating that “any matters requiring General Assembly action shall come to the General Assembly through overtures from the lower courts.”
 - An amendment to RAO IX so that *ad interim* (study) committees may only be formed via overtures from Presbyteries.
 - Initial approval of an amendment to BCO 25-3 to increase the size of a quorum for a congregational meeting called for the purpose of leaving the denomination. [The proposal does not affect the property rights of the local church].

PCA by the Numbers

Approximately 60% of our churches report statistics. Comparing 2015 with 2016 reported statistics, in 2016;

- We had 1,545 churches, an increase of 11.
- We had 347 mission churches, an increase of 20.
- We had a total membership of 374,161, an increase of 3,829
- Giving was up in all categories.

With virtually all mainline and some evangelical denominations plateaued or declining, our growth, though not as spectacular as in our early years, is noteworthy.

Suggested Prayer, Offerings and Events

- Prayer for Covenant College as determined by local sessions.
- November 2017, a Month of Prayer for Global Missions (MTW).
- A special offering for MTW Compassion Ministries on a date chosen by local sessions.
- November 5, 2017, a Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church Worldwide (MTW).
- Annual Relief Ministry Offering (PCA-RBI).
- 2018 Love Gift for PCA Women in the Church (CDM) is for PCA Retirement & Benefits, Inc.
- *The Assembly approved the request that churches contribute to the Administrative Committee on the basis of 0.35% of total tithes and offerings (excepting capital campaign projects).*
- **The Forty-sixth General Assembly will convene June 12-15, 2018, in Atlanta, GA.**