

Report to Presbytery

First of all, thank you for electing me to be a minister commissioner to the 219th General Assembly. I attended six General Assemblies back in the 1990's as a resource person from a standing GA committee, but never as a voting commissioner. And this was my first time back to GA in 14 years, so it was fascinating to see how much has changed in the time I was away, and how much has stayed the same. I reconnected with familiar faces and made new friends, and especially enjoyed the camaraderie of our Great Rivers delegation.

Our first act of business on Saturday was to elect a Moderator, and I was thrilled when Elder Cynthia Bolbach was elected. The theme of the 219th GA was "living waters," and Vice Moderator Landon Whitsitt did an amazing job, along with Stated Clerk Grayde Parsons, navigating us through what were sometimes still, calm waters, as well as a few rapids along the way. They were fair, efficient, and capable, and no matter whether someone voted for Cynthia or not, I think it's safe to say nearly everyone was pleased with her leadership.

I served on one of the few non-controversial committees at General Assembly this year, #15, which considered matters related to evangelism, church growth, and the Presbyterian Investment Loan Program, affectionately known as PILP. Because our business was pretty tame compared to other committees, we were among the few commissioners and advisory delegates who were well rested when the Plenary sessions resumed on Wednesday afternoon, where our committee was the first to report.

Most of the issues before our committee were passed by a large majority, if not unanimously, in our committee meetings – and our recommendations sailed through and were all approved by the full Assembly as well. Some of the highlights were:

- Renewing our Commitment to Help Grow Christ's Church Deep and Wide, which was created by the 218th General Assembly (2008) as a churchwide commitment to participate in God's activity through Jesus Christ in transforming the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The emphasis was first adopted by the 2008 General Assembly and encourages congregations to grow in four areas: evangelism, discipleship, servanthood, and diversity.
- Approving a new vision statement for the church and youth in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which was created by an energetic and exciting group of young people who served on the Youth Task Force.
- Reconfirming our connections to Presbyterian related colleges and universities.
- Approving the development of a task force to study racial ethnic and new immigrant church growth, and developing a comprehensive strategy for addressing the concern for Hispanic/Latino/a leadership at all levels of the church

Because our committee work did not involve any polity or confessional issues, none of the decisions we made will come back to the presbytery for approval or disapproval. However I do commend for your consideration both the new vision statement for youth in the PCUSA, as well as the recommitment to help grow the church "deep and wide" which will lead to a second "Big Tent" gathering in 2011 – keep your eyes out for information.