

PC(USA) 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016)  
Commissioner's Report

### Highlights

- Social Justice
  - Apologies and/or statements of deep regret were issued to various groups, recognizing the church's participation in racism and other forms of bias. These included: Native Americans, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians, and the LGBTQ/Q community.
  - The Doctrine of Discovery, which was established by a 1452 Papal Bull and allowed land in new worlds to be appropriated, was repudiated.
  - The desire to eradicate racism and live into Matthew 25 (invest in people and justice) was accepted, as well as the call to begin a new civil rights movement and fight against all kinds of human trafficking.
- The Way Forward
  - Overtures designed to ask GA to structure ongoing assemblies around the six great ends of the church, and/or to bring fewer constitutional changes, failed.
  - Overtures to encourage a longer time before social justice issues could be brought before GA (6 years), as well as overtures that would require concurrence of up to 1/3 of the presbyteries before a social justice issue could be brought to GA, failed.
  - The Committee recommended and the GA passed an alternate motion – to create a 2020 Vision Team to discern future structure and actions of GA. **Also - a Commission was authorized to –**
- Mid-Councils
  - Our overture to create a national Child Protection Policy and provide resources, was defeated. ACSWP and PMA believe the resources already exist at the following web addresses.
    - <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/presbyterian-church-us-sexual-misconduct-policy-an/>
    - <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/resolution-allegations-child-sexual-abuse-against-/>
    - [https://www.presbyterianmission.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/compassion-peace-justice/pcan-we\\_won't\\_let\\_it\\_happen\\_here-052214.pdf](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/site_media/media/uploads/compassion-peace-justice/pcan-we_won't_let_it_happen_here-052214.pdf)
  - Overtures to urge Presbyteries to review dependent leave policies passed with comment.
  - An overture to create an “Executive Presbyter Advisory Delegate” position for future GAs failed.
  - The Rules of Discipline will be reviewed and updated.
- Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
  - The Confession of Belhar was officially added to our Constitution
  - Encourage celebration for the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation 10/31/2017
- Middle East Issues

- An overture requesting that all PCUSA councils and churches divest of all HP stock was disapproved.
- The body approved an overture that when amended, recognizes the rights of both the state of Israel and the State of Palestine to exist, calling on both states to work for peace and stop exploitation of children.
- The body resolved to enter into a study period with other reformed denominations, ecumenical partners, and interfaith partners to study the call for a boycott that was issued in 2005.
- Immigration and Environmental Issues
  - The body agreed to keep investment in fossil fuel companies while looking for alternatives to diversify the portfolio.
  - The body also voted for increased awareness of climate change, and urges all Presbyterian agencies to consider environmental stewardship in investment decisions.
  - The body urges churches and mid-councils to support refugees.
- Mission Coordination
  - The body voted to place emphasis on ending forced labor in our supply chains (slavery), and encourage fair labor practices for ethnic and minority groups (African American males, women).
  - An overture was passed requiring PMA to sponsor four gatherings for clergywomen.
  - The four major offerings were approved (OGH, Christmas Joy, Peacemaking, and Pentecost)
- Peacemaking & International Issues
  - Korea
    - Passed overture urging USA to acknowledge actions at No Gun Ri during the Korean War (killing of civilians)
    - Work for reconciliation of North and South Korea
  - Resolution for use of nonviolent means of protest and change
  - Promote support for all sub-Saharan peoples seeking free and fair elections.
  - Overture established 5 new Peacemaking Affirmations
    - We affirm that peacemaking is essential to our faith in God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ, whose love and justice challenge evil and hatred, and who calls the church to present alternatives to violence, fear, and misused power.
    - We confess our complicity in the world's violence and our failures to stand with those who suffer, even as we pray for the Spirit's courage to unmask idolatries, speak truth about war and oppression, and respond with ministries of justice, healing, and reconciliation.
    - We follow Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace and Reconciler, and reclaim the power of nonviolent love evident in his life and teaching, his healings and reversals of evil, his cross and resurrection.
    - Learning from nonviolent struggles and counting the costs of war, we draw upon the traditions of Just War, Christian pacifism, and

Just Peacemaking to cultivate moral imagination and discern God's redemptive work in history.

- We commit ourselves to practice the things that make for peace in our daily lives, families, and communities, to risk calling our nation back from the practices of empire to the highest ideals of our heritage, and to take part in social movements for a domination-free order.
- Presbyterian Agencies
  - BOP and PF advised to continue keeping investment decisions in line with fiduciary responsibilities and the PCUSA mission and witness.
  - Commissioner's overture regarding the Jarvie Fund failed. (NYC local fund)
- Theological Issues
  - An overture to redefine marriage, restoring the previous language, failed. (Vote 443 – 119)
  - The theological issues committee supports the following in conjunction with ecumenical partners: "We the undersigned, ... clergy from many different traditions, believe that the timeless truths of the Bible and the discoveries of modern science may comfortably coexist."
    - Accepted the age of the universe of 13.6 billion years
    - Accepted the age of the earth of 4.5 billion years
    - Accept Evolution as an act of God
  - New Directory for Worship (section W of the Book of Order) was approved with a few amendments.
  - Section W-2.4011 was amended to state that all who "seek the presence of Christ" shall be welcomed to the Lord's Supper. This would include children who have been baptized but who have not yet been brought to the Lord's Supper and those who doubt or question. The requirement for baptism has been removed so that all may receive Communion in the knowledge of Jesus' love for them.

#### Per Capita

- Ten items that were approved from the docket had financial implications. The total costs were:
- 2016 – An additional .01 per person – to be taken from reserves. Current GA Per capita = \$7.12
- 2017 – An additional .17 per person for per capita of **\$7.50** including other budget increases that did not need approval by the body
- 2018 – An additional .18 per person for a per capita of **\$7.73** including other budget increases that did not need approval by the body

Respectfully Submitted,

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 Rev. Patty Wolff – Teaching Elder Commissioner to the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly