

Actions of the 34th General Assembly of the PCA

L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk

Full and Expeditious Assembly

The Thirty-fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America met in Atlanta June 20-23 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. A total of 1,415 commissioners were enrolled (1,007 Teaching Elders and 408 Ruling Elders). The assembly dealt with several complex issues but was able to complete its work two hours ahead of schedule on Friday. As was done last year, several dozen ministry-related seminars were held in conjunction with the assembly which were well attended and well received.

Dominic Aquila Elected Moderator

Following its tradition of electing a Teaching Elder as moderator in alternate years, the Assembly elected the Rev. Dr. Dominic Aquila as moderator. He is a graduate of Belhaven College, Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS), and Westminster Theological Seminary. Presently, Dr. Aquila is the president of New Geneva Theological Seminary in Colorado Springs, CO. He has served on the faculty of RTS-Jackson and has taught as an adjunct professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Knox Theological Seminary. He has served as pastor in Florida, California, Virginia, and Colorado in three denominations (RPCES, OPC, and PCA). He is editor of *byFaith* Online. He and his wife Davileen, have four children. A long-term member of the Standing Judicial Commission (now chairman), Dr. Aquila presided with an evident knowledge of procedure, laced with good humor. Also nominated was the Rev. Wayne C. Herring of Memphis, TN.

Strategic Planning Committee Report

The item that occupied the largest amount of time and had engendered a great amount of interest was the report of the *Ad Interim* Committee on Strategic Planning (SPC) bringing to completion a six-year process. Though the process did not result in the restructuring of any denominational committees and agencies as other denominations have done (Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, Church of Scotland, Southern Baptist Convention, etc.) in their strategic planning, the final report of the SPC's final report was approved with several significant recommendations. The Bills and Overtures Committee was recast into the "Overtures Committee," (OC) composed of one Ruling Elder and One Teaching Elder commissioner from each of the seventy-five presbyteries. Most of the issues that require extensive deliberation come as overtures from presbyteries. The Overtures Committee will meet a day or two before the assembly as a whole. Their meetings will be open to observers. The OC will be advised by the Committee on Constitutional Business in its deliberations. The OC will report to the General Assembly which may approve, disapprove, or recommit the recommendations of the OC. The Committees and Agencies will continue to report directly to the General Assembly. An overture to postpone consideration of the OC proposal in order to prepare a recommendation for a delegated assembly failed by a considerable margin. The new OC arrangement is the PCA's attempt to retain a grass-roots assembly in which every church may send commissioners and also to have a deliberative body with parity of Ruling and Teaching Elders to consider substantive matters.

The assembly also approved the formation of a Cooperative Ministries Committee (CMC) composed of the chairmen of each of the ten assembly-level committees and agencies

(C&As), the C&A coordinators and presidents, and six immediately past moderators of the General Assembly. The CMC is to foster cooperative ministry among the ten C&As, facilitate long-range planning, and serve as a forum to resolve inter-agency conflicts. The CMC has no executive or budgetary authority. The evaluation and recommendation of C&A budgets remains with the Administrative Committee. The Moderator of the General Assembly will serve as the moderator of the CMC at its annual meeting in January. The SPC considered its CMC proposal as an evidence of the PCA's maturing into a more trustful denomination and a means of promoting more collaborative ministry among the C&As of the General Assembly.

The SPC also recommended as priority items, "Preparing the Next Generation" and "Engaging Elders in Ministry." The SPC was dismissed with thanks. The full SPC report may be viewed at <http://www.pcaac.org/StrategicPlan.htm>.

Doctrinal Subscription

The assembly approved a procedure for recording in Presbytery minutes the doctrinal differences a minister, licentiate, or candidate may have with the *Westminster Standards*, indicating whether such stated differences are; 1) merely semantic, 2) *not* out of accord with the fundamentals of the system of doctrine, or 3) out of accord with the fundamentals of the system of doctrine. Those holding views that are out of accord with the fundamentals of the system of doctrine would be disqualified (BCO 21-4).

New Perspective Theological Issues

In an affirmative response to overtures from the Presbytery of the Blue Ridge and Rocky Mountain Presbytery, the assembly approved the formation of an *Ad Interim* Committee on Federal Vision, New Perspectives on Paul, Etc. Some of the issues involved are the nature of justification, the roles of faith and works, and baptismal efficacy. The Moderator is to appoint the seven-man committee to be funded by designated contributions to the AC. The Standing Judicial Commission announced that it has accepted a memorial from Central Carolina Presbytery concerning Louisiana Presbytery's investigation of one of its ministers on those theological issues. An SJC hearing on the memorial will be held October 19 at the Old Peachtree PCA in Duluth, Georgia (Greater Atlanta).

Growth of the PCA

The assembly approved the formation of two new presbyteries: Northwest Georgia Presbytery and Georgia Foothills Presbytery. Both come out of North Georgia Presbytery, one of the most populous presbyteries in the PCA. This will bring the total to seventy-five presbyteries. The Stated Clerk reported that in statistical year 2005 the PCA had 1,594 organized and mission churches (+41), 10,263 professions of faith (-715), a total membership of 331,126 (+944) and total reported contributions of \$595,293,036 (+\$39,615,946) with only 49% of churches submitting reports.

Interchurch Relations

The assembly approved the application of the Free Reformed Church of North America for membership in the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) and

approved a NAPARC statement that women should not be conscripted into military service or required to be in combat roles.

Book of Church Order Amendments

The assembly gave final approval to three BCO amendments (BCO 24-1 to require examination in Bible content for Ruling Elders and Deacons, BCO 15-4 commit all matters covered by Rules of Discipline except Review of Presbytery Records to the SJC, and BCO 40-5 to remove “memorial”) and gave initial approval to a proposed amendment to BCO 15-4 to impose term limitations on SJC members. Presbyteries will now vote on the proposal (BCO 26-2; 26-4).

General Assembly Ministries Annual Reports

- The *Administrative Committee and Office of the Stated Clerk (AC/SC)* reported that *byFaith* magazine has been awarded the Best Denominational Magazine Award by the Evangelical Press Association. An effort is underway to secure \$75,000 in gifts from at least seventy-five church or individual donors to meet a \$75,000 challenge grant from the Maclellan Foundation.
- *Committee on Christian Education and Publications (CE&P)* reported that CEP is partnering with Patrick Morley’s *Man in the Mirror* ministry, to develop a ministry to men. Dr. George Fuller has developed *Serving and Training Seniors*, a resource for seniors, that is being used in training sessions in churches and presbyteries.
- *Covenant College (CC)* reported an all time high enrollment of 903 in traditional programs and a total of 1,330 students. The 2004-5 academic year was the 50th year of the college. The Campus Center campaign has a five-year goal of \$31,000,000 for expanded facilities, endowment, maintenance, and annual needs.
- *Covenant Theological Seminary (CTS)* reported that it celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. A Capital Campaign, *By His Grace, For His Glory*, has been launched as a three-year initiative to assist the seminary in accomplishing its mission. CTS has had seventeen years in a row of increased enrollments. One in four graduates plants a church within eight years of graduation.
- *Mission to North America (MNA)* reported that in addition to facilitating and encouraging church planting, church renewal, and chaplaincy ministries, this past year has seen a major increase in mercy ministry through Disaster Relief in response to the hurricanes that ravaged the Gulf Coast. That ministry continues as needs are still unmet.
- *Mission to the World (MTW)* reported the number of PCA churches engaged in global church planting partnerships is now 212 (a 28% increase in one year) and the number of national church planters with whom MTW partners has increased from 143 to 438 (a 300% increase over three years). The long-term missionary force is now just under 600, 64% of whom are in church planting, MTW’s main mission.
- *PCA Foundation (PCAF)* reported that almost \$3 million was channeled to PCA local churches, over \$1,000,000 was channeled to PCA C&As, and over \$2,000,000 was channeled to other evangelical ministries in 2005.
- *PCA Retirement & Benefits (PCA-RBI)* reported that RE Bill Kuh is retiring as president due to family health concerns. RE Gary Campbell of St. Louis has been elected by the board as the new president. In 2005 a Life Planning ministry was launched for the

retirement plan participants. \$467,000 was distributed in ministerial relief to widows and other PCA servants of the Church who were in need.

- *Ridge Haven Conference Center* (RH) reported RH serves 1,200 campers, 1,000 conferees, and 5,800 retreat services for a total of 8,000 people each year. A Capital Campaign has been initiated by the board, led by RH Administrator Mo Up de Graf, to improve guest comforts, aesthetics, and guest services, with emphasis on the dining area, adult and family housing.
- *Reformed University Ministries* (RUM) reported that RUM now has 110 campus ministries in thirty-one states in America and four countries abroad, ministering to thousands of students through instruction in Evangelism and Missions, Growth in Grace, Fellowship and Service, and a Biblical World-and-Life View.

Special Resolutions

The Assembly adopted an overture memorializing Dr. Edmund P. Clowney (1917-2005) for his faithful and fruitful ministry, adopted a resolution honoring Dr. Woodrow Wilson Benton Jr. for his forty years of ministry, adopted a resolution of thanks to RE Ed Nalley for his thirty-three years of service to the General Assembly, and adopted a memorial statement recognizing John J. "Jack" Sullivan's good and faithful service.

Special Days, Offerings and Events Recommended for PCA Churches

- September 10, Seniors Ministry (Grandparents and Senior Citizens Day) (CE&P).
- October 2006, a month of Prayer for global missions (MTW).
- October 15, 2006 Covenant College Sunday. Prayer for CC.
- The 2006 WIC Offering for MTW Street Children's Ministry.
- A special offering for MTW Compassion Ministry to be taken in 2006, date set by Sessions.
- November 12, 2006, A Day of Prayer and Fasting for the Persecuted Church worldwide (MTW).
- November 2006, Thanksgiving Offering for MNA Urban and Mercy Ministries.
- December 2006, Offering for Ministerial Relief (PCA-RBI).
- February 11, 2007, Ridge Haven Sunday, Day of Prayer.
- May 6-12, 2007, Week of Prayer coordinated by CE&P.
- **The 35th General Assembly will convene June 12-15, 2007, in Memphis, Tennessee.**

A Word of Thanks and Request

The Administrative Committee/Office of the Stated Clerk provides the administrative services and legal structure for the PCA to minister cooperatively as a denomination. All churches, presbyteries, and denominational ministries benefit from the ministry of the AC/SC. Therefore, we request that all PCA churches consider supporting the AC/SC through the *per capita* giving of Partnership Shares or *proportional* giving (for example, one-half of one percent of local church offerings). **We appreciate your support for this needful ministry.**

L. Roy Taylor, Stated Clerk PCA