



IN THE LOOP

G.A. Special Edition 1

July 7, 2010

News of Eastminster Presbytery

Committees Complete Their Work. Plenary Begins!

The Committees have completed their work, and important work it is. Our commissioners have spent two and a half days focused on the business assigned to their committees. Elmarie Parker served on Committee 11—Social Justice; Mark Rupert served on Committee 10—Social Justice; Jean Garrett served on Committee

12—Civil Union and Marriage; and Sarah Bender served on Committee 8—Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. Beginning at 1:30 p.m. today the Assembly resumed plenary and will continue morning, afternoon, and evening for three solid days with breaks for meals.

Minneapolis has proven to

be a most hospitable host. The convention center is spacious and all the hotels are within easy walking distance. Restaurants are moderately priced and in abundance. And, yes, the people of Minneapolis are friendly.

Dan Schomer

Key Decisions of the Day

The secular press will not pay much attention to the decisions made by the 219th General Assembly on July 7, but the church surely will. Three key decisions were made today relating to the constitution of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

The Assembly decided it was not ready to act on revising the Heidelberg Catechism, one of the confessions in the Book of Confessions. Instead, a new translation will be presented to the 220th General Assembly in 2012 that uses contemporary language and is more faithful to the original German.

When it came to the Belhar Confessions, a confessional statement coming out of South Africa in a time of apartheid, the Assembly was in no mood to delay action. Despite amendments to delay, the Assembly voted with

77% in favor of recommending the Belhar Confessions to the presbyteries. As with all changes to the Book of Confessions, it will take 2/3rds of the presbyteries to include Belhar in the Book of Confessions.

The proposed new Form of Government was the focus of the evening plenary session. Studied for four years, this streamlined section of the Book of Order proposed to give presbyteries and congregations greater latitude in how church government is put into practice. The new Form of Government includes recommendations for how presbyteries may create their own handbooks specifying the particular practices of Committees on Ministry and Preparation for Ministry.

After a substitute motion, numerous amendments, and plenty of debate, the commissioners voted by 69%

to approve a new Form of Government.

Elder Linda Valentine was elected to a second four-year term as Executive Director of the General Assembly Mission Council. Linda has proven to be a courageous and creative leader at a time that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has faced enormous challenges. Linda's reelection promises to continue the positive changes that we have been seeing in Louisville.

A subtle but significant change to the invitation to the Lord's Supper was approved by the Assembly. Those who are "not yet baptized" are welcomed at the table, but the church is expected to encourage such persons to explore baptism and Christian discipleship.



219th GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2010)

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Fun Facts

A nearly paperless General Assembly is being achieved this year. Pc-biz has been working flawlessly, making it easy to keep up with a full and busy docket. In place of thick notebooks, everyone can be seen lugging around laptop computers. During plenary it is quite a sight to view the sea of computer screens blinking along in sync. Colleagues around me have one eye on their laptop screens and the other on their iPhones or Blackberry screens.

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Quote of the Day

Elder Cynthia Bolbach, Moderator of the 219th General Assembly, commented that she had not attended seminary, but had gone to law school. Someone on the platform responded, "Just like John Calvin." Moderator Bolbach responded, "Yes, just like John Calvin." Bolbach then went on to praise the vital ministry carried out by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminaries.

Follow the Assembly

Do you want to keep up with all the business of the 219th General Assembly? Go to pcusa.org/ga219 for the latest.

As is usually the case, the first day of plenary business is kept somewhat light. The docket with "thicken" on Thursday and Friday.

The Eastminster Presbytery dinner will take place on Thursday evening. I look forward to getting their perspectives as commissioners.

Well, it's time to pack up the laptop and head for the convention center to begin Thursday's adventure. I don't want to miss worship. Please, forgive the blank space...