



First
Presbyterian
Church
of Waynesboro, Virginia

The Columns *-Online.*

September 29, 2021 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement.*



World Communion Sunday October 3, 2021



COVID average Incidence Rate per 100,000
from the Virginia Dept of Health.

Augusta County:	53.6
Harrisonburg	36.2
Rockingham	40.8
Staunton	51.6
Waynesboro	96.6
Average/100K	55.76

Level of Community Transmission

High

Substantial

Moderate

Low

Planning for 225th General Assembly complicated
by hybrid schedule
commissioners/advisory delegates hard to recruit



September 17, 2021

by Rick Jones, *Office of the General Assembly*

The 225th General Assembly is scheduled for June 18–July 9, 2022, with schedules designed to minimize the number of people meeting at the same time. Committees will meet in Louisville 20–July 2, followed by online plenaries July 5–9.

Organizers knew there would be challenges in planning for a hybrid event. The three-week block of time necessary for committee meetings and virtual plenaries next year has created some headaches for mid council leaders as they seek those willing to serve as commissioners and advisory delegates.

The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), says OGA went into planning for next year's Assembly recognizing the need for change in how the Church conducts business.

We are up against a wall in a lot of ways, but we are also in the process of shaping core values around who we are and whose we are. How does that play out in a General Assembly that sometimes turns into a real power game and what does that do for those who have not had a voice?" "I recognize the difficulties of piecing this together and we may not reach all of the goals we are looking at. The larger question is how do we build an Assembly that has a significant shift in our values, power, race, and who does and does not have access?"

The Office of the General Assembly recently conducted a survey with mid council leaders to get their feedback on Assembly plans and the challenges in recruiting commissioners and young adult advisory delegates (YAAD). Nearly half indicated that the length of time commissioners must hold open for the Assembly until they receive their committee assignments late February was the biggest factor. Once assigned, commissioners and advisory delegates would spend 10 days in plenary and committee time.

Staff presented alternative assignment processes that would provide definitive dates for in-person participation but might compromise the diverse makeup of committees. They included:

- Compiling a report of all presbyteries, including membership and the number of commissioners they are eligible to elect.
- Allocating commissioners and advisory delegates among six regions that have 80–82 for a total of 486.
- Researching and highlighting those that have historically elected commissioners of color.

- Assigning each presbytery to week one or week two so that approximately half of the number of commissioners in each region are assigned to each week.
- Notifying each presbytery of its assigned week so it can be included in the recruitment process, by no later than Oct. 5.
- Additional steps that follow Standing Rules already in place.

"There's one diversity we should be thinking of as well and that would be at the income level, economic diversity," said COGA member Robin Pugh. "Although I am one of the people who support this new design for General Assembly, the side effect is we have this large chunk of time that people will have to keep open. That may be a challenge for people in certain kinds of jobs who have less flexibility in term of vacation or the ability to determine their work schedule."

COGA member Andy James feels the proposal is a few months late.

"We're five weeks out from our presbytery meeting to elect commissioners. The ship has sailed along with the benefit that might come from it. I feel it is offset by the potential for confusion and concerns around diversity," he said. "If we could have done this two months ago, I might have been in support of it. We need to stay the course and continue to be apologetic and understanding, encouraging our presbytery leaders as they seek people to serve and that the Holy Spirit will open hearts and minds for those to do God's work."

Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart, Co-Moderator of the 224th General Assembly, says this is the reality of a majority white church.

"We talk about wanting presbyteries to really understand what criteria we need to create more diversity, but we are mirroring the history of the Church," she said. "Where are all of the decisions being made and are they moving in a uniform way toward the common goal of changes in the Church? Some people will have to step out of their positions and leave a seat at the table or we won't increase diversity."



Music Notes for this week.

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[Virginia Department of Health updates](#)

Sources of Inspiration

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[Jan Edmiston's Blog](#)

[The Upper Room Devotional](#)

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[Mr. Boffo](#)

This week's music underscores the celebration of World Communion Sunday. The prelude is one of the last works by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), a chorale prelude based on the hymn *Schmücke dich, o liebe Seele* (Adorn yourself, O dear soul).

The introit is the spiritual *Let Us Break Bread Together On Our Knees*. Miles Mark Fisher notes in *Negro Slave Songs in the United States* (1953), that, originally, the hymn "relates hardly at all to holy communion. It seems to have been a signal song of Virginia slaves during the eighteenth century who used it and similar ones to convene their secret meetings."

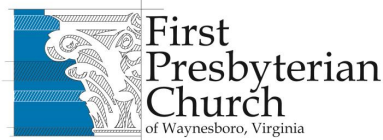


Stuempfle.

The opening hymn is *Loaves Were Broken, Words Were Spoken*, a 21st century text set to a 19th century tune. Rev. Dr. Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr. (1923-2007) penned the text in 2005. The music was originally part of the *Sacred Harp* tunes, published in 1844. The harmonization was created by James H. Wood (1921-2003) in 1958.

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A COMMENTARY ON PRAYER?

