



First
Presbyterian
Church
of Waynesboro, Virginia

The Columns *Online*

June 21, 2022 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

The 225th General Assembly elects co-moderators.

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky – Acting decisively on the first ballot, the 2022 General Assembly on June 18 elected a team of two ministers to serve as its co-moderators – both women of color, thirty years apart in age, both of whom said they felt a strong pull of the spirit to serve in this role. They will moderate this first-ever hybrid gathering of the denomination’s highest council.

Ruth Santana-Grace, executive presbyter for Philadelphia Presbytery, and the Shavon Starling-Louis, pastor of Memorial Presbyterian Church in

Charlotte, North Carolina, (Presbytery of Charlotte) won a first-ballot victory over the Marilyn McKelvey Tucker-Marek, pastor of Forsyth Presbyterian Church in Flint River Presbytery in Georgia and Ruling Elder Josefina (“Fina”) Ahumada, a member of Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona (Presbytery de Cristo). The vote was 203-151.



Santana-Grace, Starling-Louis.

continued

Co-moderators, continued

Santana-Grace and Starling Louis will be responsible for steering the Assembly – a combination of in-person committee meetings and virtual plenary sessions – through the uncharted waters of a hybrid meeting that will stretch over three weeks from June 18-July 9. In the ensuing two years, Santana-Grace and Starling-Louis will serve as what they have repeatedly referred to as “ambassadors” for this assembly to the larger church and the world.

During the question and answer session, Santana-Grace, who calls herself a member of the Puerto Rican diaspora, responded that the uniqueness of Presbyterians is “our willingness to submit ourselves to our discernment of the Holy Spirit.” She added that Presbyterians “are committed to reforming who we are — we don’t erase, we reform, we improve.”

Starling-Louis added that “Presbyterians proclaim in word and action – heart, mind and spirit – that we turn ourselves over to God.”

At a post-election news conference, the new co-moderators expanded on their hopes for the church going forward and their sense of an unexpected yet unabating call to serve.

“On paper, it shouldn’t have worked,” said Starling-Louis, 39, who was recently installed as

the new pastor of Memorial Presbyterian Church in Charlotte earlier this year, but who said the session of her congregation unanimously supported her call to stand as co-moderator. Santana-Grace, 69, said both her family and her presbytery have supported her — saying her presbytery “claimed it as part of their call,” and her son, Dakota, “wanted me to lean in a lot earlier to a role like this.”

They spoke of the concerns they are hearing from congregations at the grassroots, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic lingers. “There is a genuine sense of deep grief,” Starling-Louis said. “We have lost people.” With the fatigue the pandemic has brought, people are needing to learn “what does it mean to take a break? What does it mean to breathe?”

Santana-Grace said “the exhaustion is real,” and “there is no returning to what has been.” But this also is a season of creativity and opportunity, she said, for an institution that “has often been tempted by those seven deadly words: We never did it that way before.”

She spoke of the power of Easter morning, of the darkness of the tomb that gave way to resurrection. “We become free to say, ‘God, what would you have us do?’” Starling-Louis said. It’s an invitation to “shift from we don’t have, we can’t, to what is it that God would have us do right now?”



What to expect out of this year's General Assembly Part 2

Leslie Scanlon, PNS. New confessions. At least three recommendations ask the 2022 General Assembly to appoint a committee to write a new confession for the PC(USA). One, from the General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, speaks of the need for the denomination to have a new confession that speaks directly to the North American situation. At least since the arrival of Christopher Columbus and the promulgation of the Doctrine of Discovery, the Western Hemisphere has not experienced a single day free from the sin of racism. ... In order for the PC(USA) to respond to the call of God with humility and intention, it is incumbent upon us to investigate the extent to which our own institutions and common life have benefited from the sins of racism and racialized supremacy. A second, from the Presbytery of Arkansas, asks for a new confession to be written to consider matters of theological anthropology including this question: What does it mean to be human in the 21st century? And a third asks for study of a proposed new confession, with the title “A Confession for Such a time as This,” written by young ministry leaders from the Synod of the Northeast. Among other points, that proposed confession rejects the twin heresies of white supremacy and racism, the sins of gender discrimination and xenophobia, and “the greed of corporate capitalism.

International issues. Presbyterians are raising concerns about human rights and justice issues around the world, calling on the PC(USA) to use its voice and influence to support the disenfranchised.

Recommendations coming to this assembly include:

A call for the PC(USA) to support U.S. efforts to provide humanitarian support for sub-Saharan Africa, and support work towards peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

A call to support work for human rights in the Philippines, including asking the government there to affirm the lives and human dignity of the urban poor, farmers, and indigenous peoples of the Philippines;

A request that the PC(USA) urge the U.S. government to support a peaceful solution to violence and civil unrest in Cameroon;

Proposals for how the PC(USA) can “respond to the suffering of the Syrian people,” by working to end sanctions, promoting reconstruction, and more;

A call for Presbyterians to support the Korean Peace Appeal.

Family leave. The Family Leave Policy Task Force is asking the assembly to approve a proposed amendment to the PC(USA) constitution. That amendment would require that the minimum terms of call for ministers include 12 weeks of paid family medical leave, which could include leave taken after the birth or adoption of a child, to care for an ill or disabled family member, or “to heal following a loss or tragic event.” This recommendation for family leave would only apply to called and installed PC(USA) ministers, not other church employees, although the rationale states that “the task force would urge the adoption of this same provision of care for all PC(USA) workers.”

In the end, it will be up to this assembly to decide – on this issue and so many others – what comes next.

Music Notes.

It is the season of Pentecost, and this week, we'll sing two hymns celebrating the Holy Spirit. The opening hymn will be *We Gather Together*, with music by Eduard Kremser (1838-1914). The Austrian composer spent many years collecting traditional songs from his hometown of Vienna. Kremser was choir master of the Vienna Men's Choir, vice president and the first honorary member of the Society of Authors, Composers and Music Publishers and an honorary membership in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (Society of Music Friends) in Vienna. The hymn is named after the composer.



Kremser.

The music for the closing hymn, *Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove*, was composed by John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876). The English composer was the precentor and choir director at Durham Cathedral, where he reformed the choir by insisting on consistent attendance (!), increasing rehearsals and initiating music festivals. Dykes composed over three hundred hymns over the course of his career. He called the tune to Sunday's closing hymn St. Agnes, after the young Roman Christian woman who was martyred in AD 304.

Our Worship Channels

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"Summer's here - do you want to talk incessantly about tomatoes or corn?"

This Week in History.



Union Major General Gordon Granger arrive in Galveston, TX and reads General Order No. 3, informing the people that *all slaves were free*, and there was *an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves*. An estimated 250,000 enslaved African Americans in Texas were emancipated.

June 19, 1865



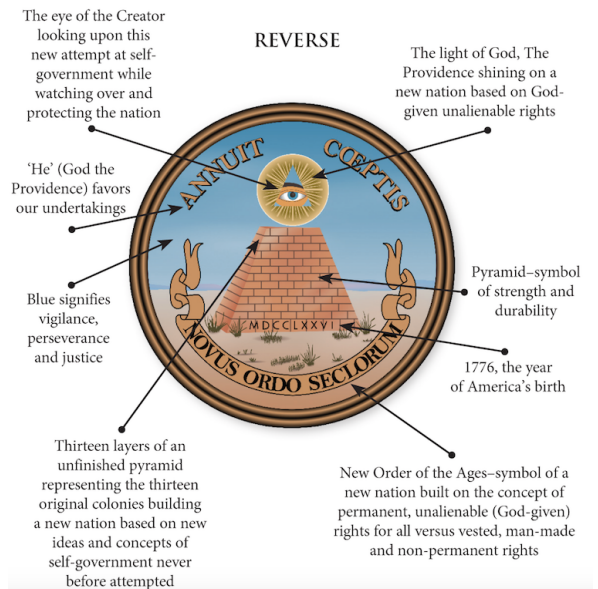
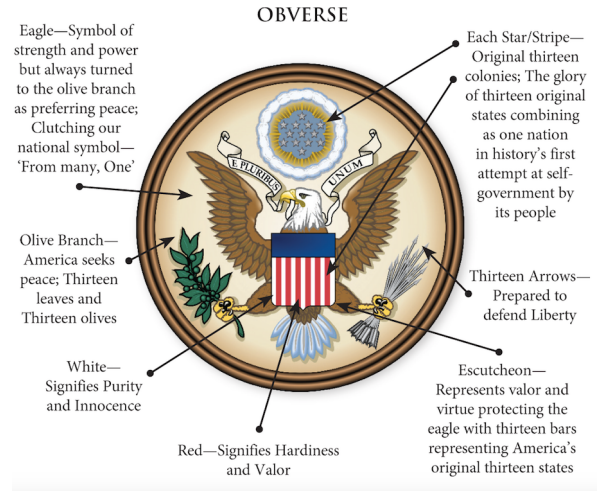
A Michigan Central troop train struck the rear of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus train in Ivanhoe, Indiana., killing fifty-three circus performers and numerous circus animals.

June 22, 1918



Soviet Russia blockades Berlin, prompting an emergency airlift to relieve isolated West Berliners. During the Berlin Airlift, American and British planes flew about 278,000 flights, delivering 2.3 million tons of food, coal and medical supplies.

June 24, 1948



Congress officially adopts the Great Seal of the United States of America.

June 20, 1782



North Korean troops cross the 38th parallel and invade South Korea. UN force entered the conflict, which would end with an armistice three years later.

June 25, 1950