



First  
Presbyterian  
Church  
of Waynesboro, Virginia

# The Columns *Online*

July 20, 2022 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

CONGREGATIONAL  
MEETING

This Sunday after worship, we will hear a report from the session,  
and vote on the following slate of officers:

Ruling Elders

**Joan Berry**

Class of 2023 (1 year)

**Betsy Ruehl**

Class of 2024 (2 years)

**Mike Cunningham & Cynthia Hoover**

Class of 2025 (3 years)

## The Rev. Adriene Thorne is called to be The Riverside Church's eighth senior minister.

(PNS) — The Rev. Adriene Thorne, leader of First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, has been voted in by the congregation of The Riverside Church in the City of New York as the eighth senior minister in the church's history. Thorne is the first African American woman to serve as senior minister. She will begin her post on Oct. 1. Thorne will be the third Presbyterian to lead the interracial, interdenominational, and international church.

"I am grateful to God for the blessed opportunity to bring my gifts to The Riverside Church and to join with the faithful servants there who are tirelessly nurturing God's fresh vision of the Beloved Community," said Thorne.

"In this tumultuous chapter in our nation's story, I am excited to lead an engaged community of faith that has the grace and fortitude to repair the harm visited upon God's planet and people."

Thorne has served First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn since 2016. She spent eight years at Middle Collegiate Church in a variety of ministerial roles, concluding her service there as executive minister. With neighborhood partners, she co-founded the award-winning Brooklyn Heights Community Fridge in 2021.



Thorne.



The Nave, Riverside Church.

Affiliated with both the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A. and the United Church of Christ, the Riverside Church is one of the leading voices of progressive Christianity. Built by John D. Rockefeller Jr. in 1930, it has long been a forum for important civic and spiritual leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, President Bill Clinton, the Dalai Lama, and countless others.

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## calvin and hobbes



## General Assembly creates a commission to unify two agencies at the top level of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)

By Leslie Scanlon, Presbyterian News Service

Louisville, Kentucky – The General Assembly voted July 8 to approve creating a commission with the power to act and the responsibility of unifying the Presbyterian Mission Agency and the Office of the General Assembly — basically, to restructure the national structure of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

What’s driving this are deep questions about whether a denomination – where more than 60% of the churches have 100 members or fewer, and 20% have 25 members or fewer – can financially sustain the denominational structure that exists now. Presbyteries and congregations feel cramped for money, and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA), which depends almost solely on per capita funding sent from congregations via the presbyteries, is set to deplete its reserves by the end of 2024.

After listening to more than 100 mid council leaders, “we know there is a need for a new funding model,” said Valerie Young, co-moderator of the *Special Committee on Per Capita Based Funding and National Church Financial Sustainability*, created by the General Assembly in 2018. “As membership goes down, per capita goes up. ... Our current funding model is strangling our churches, and has a significant negative impact on small congregations.”

All this has led to deep, complicated conversations about what needs to change at the top levels of the denomination — and a recommendation from the Special Committee that the 2022 General Assembly create a new commission with the power to make big changes at the top levels of the church. That’s where church politics got real.



On July 1, the assembly’s Financial Resources Committee voted to create a *task force* rather than a *commission*. This is notable because a task force does not have the power to act on its own. It can only make recommendations to the next assembly. A commission can act on its own.

The Special Committee, supported by the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) wanted a commission, with more power. The Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) board did not.

In presenting their committee’s report to the assembly, Young and Laura Cheifetz, co-moderators of the Special Committee, made it clear to the commissioners the political pressure they have felt to soften their recommendations.

“Extraordinary effort went into getting the special committee to alter our recommendations after the report had been drafted, and before the assembly had begun,” Cheifetz told the assembly. “We have been asked to obfuscate and to be less direct about our findings. Things have been said and people have been hurt. Why is a system seeking to be led by the Holy Spirit so afraid of change?”



## General Assembly creates a commission to unify two agencies *continued.*



Young & Cheifetz.

She described the pressure as “evidence of further pushback of a fearful system.”

Young said: “We did not pick data to support our conclusions.” The team she led spoke to more than 100 presbytery and synod leaders, and “we allowed the data to lead us to our conclusions. We ask that you make your decisions based on understanding the information available to you and the movement of the Holy Spirit among you, and not on innuendos and threats. Threats are a part of a fearful system pushing back against much needed and urgent change.”

The politics surrounding this issue were evident every time this issue was discussed. Warren Lesane, chair of the PMA board, told the assembly that the PMA board favors a task force, and warned that “a commission could very well disable and cause the Matthew 25 effort to go off-board.”

Gregory Bentley, co-moderator of the 2020 General Assembly, spoke in favor of a task force rather than a commission, saying that with Diane Moffett (President and Executive Director of PMA) and Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson, who also leads OGA, “we have two dynamic effective, and innovative leaders” committed to working together. With

that kind of leadership willing to work for unification, “a commission is wrongheaded and heavy-handed.”

COGA found itself in a difficult spot – caught by surprise when the Stated Clerk told the assembly’s Financial Resources Committee on July 1 he supported a task force, not a commission – citing his close working relationship with Moffett and his trust in her. Nelson’s recommendation was contrary to that of his own committee.

In the end, the assembly voted by a vote 321-54, to switch course and to support the Special Committee’s recommendation. The assembly also voted 344-12 to support a second recommendation creating a Funding Model Development team “to develop, recruit, implement, and provide oversight of possible funding model experiments” — with more details to be found here. It also voted to add two young adult advisory delegates to both groups.

Following the assembly’s vote, Moffett said in a brief interview that “the Presbyterian Mission Agency is ready to work with the commission and the assembly and OGA and whoever else we need to work with, to make sure that the mission of the church goes forward. We welcome this creative time. We have all prayed about this. So this is the desire of the assembly, and we are going to make it sing.”

And Nelson said: “The commissioners have made their decision. We’ll work with them to make that happen, as best we can. It’s in the Lord’s hands. ...



Moffett & Nelson.

# Music Notes

for Pentecost VII.



Lafferty.

The Anthem for the Seventh Sunday after Pentecost will be *Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God* by **Karen Lafferty** (b. 1948). The American composer was born in Alamogordo, New Mexico. She composed the music for her most popular piece fifty years ago, in 1971. Lafferty said that she was at the end of her financial rope – her savings depleted and a looming car payment. After attending a Bible study on Matthew 6:33, she was encouraged – and challenged by the scripture. She went home, wrote the tune, recorded it

on a tape recorder (remember those?!) and added the descant. The next Sunday, Lafferty taught the song to the congregation, where it caught on right away. She says that the commissions from the hymn have funded about forty percent of her mission support. Lafferty is currently working with the organization *Youth With A Mission*, which focuses on supporting young people in character-building through music and songwriting

## Our Worship Channels

*click on the logos*



Liturgist this week: Danny Leech

Scripture lessons: Psalm 138  
Luke 11:1-13

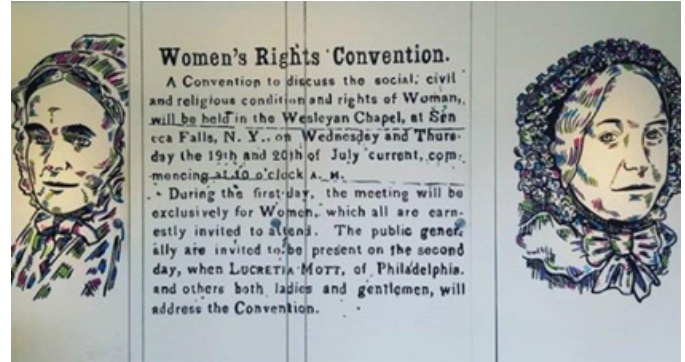
Sermon: We pray.



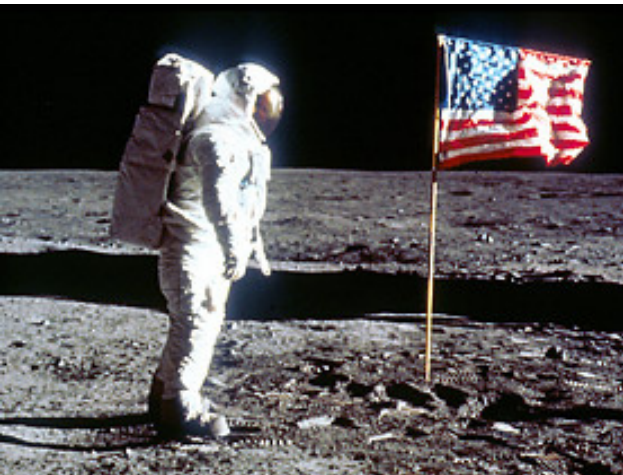
# This Week in History.



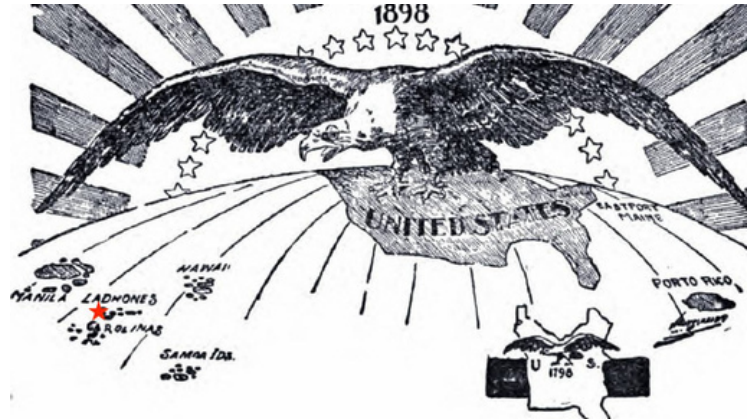
Nelson Mandela born the son of a Zulu chief in Qunu, South Africa.  
July 18, 1918



Equal Rights movement in America begins with the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Conference.  
July 19, 1848



Astronaut Neil Armstrong becomes the first person to set foot on the Moon.  
July 20, 1969



The western Pacific Island of Guam ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Paris following the Spanish-American war.  
July 21, 1898



John Dillinger killed by Police outside the Biograph Theater in Chicago, IL.  
July 22, 1934



Egyptian King Farouk overthrown by military coup.  
July 23, 1952