

October 11, 2023 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

COGA paves a new way forward

GA will see many historic changes, including no exhibitor hall

by John A. Bolt

Louisville — For many members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a General Assembly is more akin to a family reunion than a gathering of the denomination's highest governing body. It's where relationships are made and rekindled and where some of the lesser-known parts of the denomination get to tell their story to a larger audience.

It is no small matter, then, when the look and feel of this now-biennial event undergoes major change. The first 216 assemblies were held annually until 2004, when they were called only in even-numbered years. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted radical changes in the assembly; in the words of Acting Stated Clerk Bronwen Boswell, "this is the fourth iteration" since 2018, the last traditional biennial gathering; the previous two assemblies have been either completely online (2020) or in-person committee meetings, with plenary sessions online (2022)

"This is going to feel different, yet it will have some taste of similarity," Boswell said at the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) meeting from Sept. 12-14. While together, the group approved detailed plans for the 226th General Assembly from June 25 to July 4. (The decision to forego the exhibit hall, however, had been made at a previous meeting.)

In addition, at the meeting, COGA discussed the impact of the coming unification in 2025 of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) and approved an updated job description for the stated clerk.

When commissioners are called to order in Salt Lake City on June 29, there will have been three days of online committee meetings on the preceding Tuesday through Thursday, followed by a day off while commissioners head to Utah and get their reports ready for consideration by the full body. Then come six days of plenary, with adjournment on Thursday, July 4.

While the way business is conducted will be mostly familiar, aside from the logistics, there will be changes in what happens outside the meetings, perhaps the most significant one being the absence of an exhibit hall. While it has shrunk noticeably in recent assemblies, the exhibit hall has remained the PC(USA) town square — a place where most Presbyterian mission and related organizations have been on display for all to see. In addition, it has been a gathering place for colleagues and friends to meet and embrace, and even perhaps connect before sharing a meal at a communal dining hall.

GA226 continued

While there are only 456 presbytery commissioners and assorted advisory delegates and support staff and officials, the assembly has traditionally drawn several thousand people to a host city. It's unclear how that will change in 2024, but likely there will be significantly fewer people. There will be other changes as well. For example, OGA will not be able to provide as much support for other activities, notably the scores of special dinners and meetings that usually occur around the assembly. Organizers will be on their own, except for having their events listed on the assembly calendar. Nevertheless, Boswell challenged the notion that GA226 will be a "closed down" assembly and said everyone remains welcome to attend.



Proposed Docket for the 226th General Assembly (2024) Online Committees. Plenary in Salt Lake City, Utah.

All times listed are Mountain Time (MT).

SUN.	MON.	TUES.	WED.	THURS.	FRI.	SAT.
June 23	June 24	June 25	June 26	June 27	June 28	June 29 <i>Live Into Hope</i>
		8:00 am Brief Opening Plenary Online Committees <i>(time determined by committee leadership)</i>	Online Committees <i>(time determined by committee leadership)</i>	Online Committees <i>(time determined by committee leadership)</i>		YAAD Training 6:00-8:00 pm Opening Reception Hosted by Presbytery of Utah <i>Meet (Co)Moderator Candidates</i> <i>Meet the Agencies</i>
June 30 <i>...and hear God's word</i>	July 1 <i>...of captive's freed</i>	July 2 <i>...the right to be</i>	July 3 <i>...the end of greed</i>	July 4 <i>...to faith, hope, joy, and peace</i>	July 5	July 6
Worship in area congregations 1:30 pm <i>Meet the Agencies</i> 2:30 pm Worship 3:00 pm Plenary 5:30 pm Dinner <i>Meet the Agencies</i> 8:00 pm Moderator Election	8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Plenary 12:00 pm Lunch 1:30 pm Plenary 5:30 pm Dinner 7:00 pm Plenary 9:00 pm Recess	8:30 am Ecumenical Worship 9:30 am Plenary 12:00 pm Lunch 1:30 pm Plenary 5:30 pm Dinner 7:00 pm Plenary 9:00 pm Recess	8:30 am Worship 9:30 am Plenary 12:00 pm Lunch 1:30 pm Plenary 5:30 pm Dinner 7:00 pm Plenary 9:00 pm Recess	8:30 am Worship 9:00 am Plenary 12:00 pm Closing Worship 1:00 pm Assembly Adjourns	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 10px;"> Deadlines 180 Day- Dec. 28, 2023 - Commissioner and Advisory Delegates Names Submitted 120 Day- Feb. 26, 2024 - All Reports from Committees/Agencies - Overtures with Constitutional Implications 60 Day- Apr. 26, 2024 - Overtures with Financial Implications 45 Day- May 11, 2024 - All Overtures and Concurrences </div>	

"The elected members of COGA are very aware of the relational nature of GA meetings for many in the PC(USA)," said Dave Davis, COGA vice-moderator. "We are very aware of a sense of loss, grieving, and longing for a GA as it once was for ourselves and for others. As COGA is repeatedly trying to communicate, while the pandemic has driven significant change to the General Assembly meeting, not all of the changes are related to health and safety."

GA226 continued

The primary responsibility of COGA and the Office of the General Assembly is the meeting itself, he said. “The role of commissioners and the business of the General Assembly has always been the first priority. The stewardship of the meeting in terms of financial cost and availability of human resources is a significant concern.”

“The nature of General Assembly meetings in the longer-term future will clearly be impacted by the ongoing work of the Unification Commission related to matters of governance and General Assembly finances,” Davis said.

Many agree that it seems unlikely General Assemblies will return to the previous format, even if finances improve or change.

“With the General Assembly’s decision last year to have the meetings in 2024 and 2026 be the same format of online committees and in-person plenaries, I really don’t know what the collective wisdom will be for 2028,” Acting Stated Clerk Boswell said. “What I do know is that we need to be open to how the Spirit will lead us into the future.”

RE•FORMATION

THEN • NOW • ALWAYS

Sunday, October 29

We will celebrate Reformation Sunday
with our sisters and brothers at

Second Presbyterian Church

133 North Delphine Avenue

Worship begins at 11:00

Covered Dish Luncheon to follow

Just drop your dishes off in the kitchen.



Music Notes for October 15

The Lord is My Shepherd, I Shall Not Want...

Those familiar words open Psalm 23, the first lesson in this week's worship service. Scores of pieces have been written on the comforting text, including the hymns *My Shepherd Will Supply My Need* and *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*, both of which are based on folk tunes.

The King of Love My Shepherd Is is set to the tune ST. COLUMBA, named for the Irish saint who brought Irish Christianity to Scotland. The melody was one of many Irish tunes collected by George Petrie (1789-1866) and included in various publications, such as *Hymns Ancient and Modern* in 1868 and *The English Hymnal* of 1906.

My Shepherd Will Supply My Need comes from an anonymous Appalachian melody. The tune, initially known as HOPEWELL, first appeared in 1828 in *The Beauties of Harmony*. A few years later, the tune was renamed RESIGNATION for the 1832 publication *Genuine Church Music*.

OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

CLICK ON THE LOGOS



WORSHIP THIS WEEK:

PSALM 23

MATTHEW 22: 1-14

SERMON: 'THE GUEST.'



calvin and hobbes





BETTER TOGETHER

Bible Study

**MONDAY,
OCTOBER 16**

**HERMITAGE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

1:00-2:00 p.m.

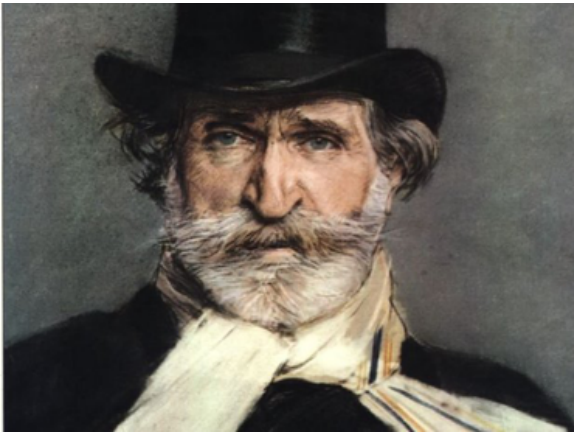
**COME OUT AND JOIN
WESTMINSTER'S DCE, JOHN TINDALL,
AND EXPLORE TOGETHER
THE GREAT STORIES
AND THEMES OF THE BIBLE.**

This Week in History.



Edward Vernon '**Eddie**' **Rickenbacker** is born in Columbus, OH. An engineer and racing driver in the fledgling auto industry, he would command the first U.S. air unit in World War I, becoming America's leading Ace with 26 victories, and receiving the Medal of Honor. He would head Eastern Air Lines from 1934-63.

OCTOBER 8, 1890



Italian opera composer **Giuseppe Verdi** is born in Le Roncole, Italy. His operas, including *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata* and *Aida* are among the most popular of all classical music performed today.

OCTOBER 10, 1813

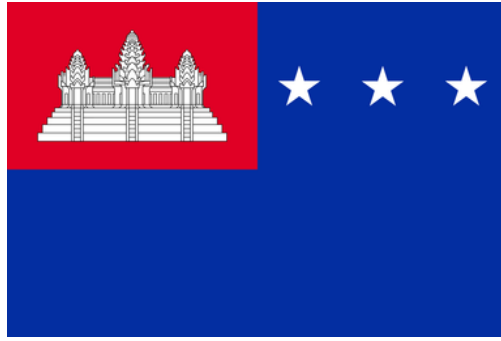


During a speech by Philippine delegate Lorenzo Sumulong during the 902nd Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, **Nikita Khrushchev**, First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, pounded his shoe on his delegate-desk in protest.

OCTOBER 12, 1960

Civil Rights leader **The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize - its youngest recipient, for his work for Civil Rights.

OCTOBER 14, 1964

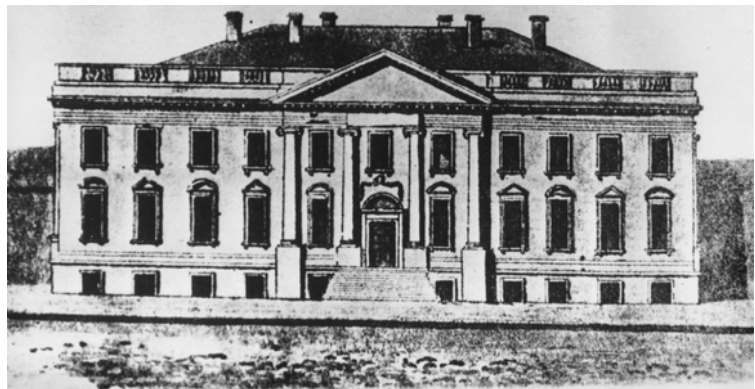


Following a coup d'état, the Cambodian legislature abolishes the monarchy and declares the Khmer Republic under military dictator **Lon Nol**, who would maintain power for five years.

OCTOBER 9, 1970

Anna **Eleanor Roosevelt** is born in New York, NY. As First Lady for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, she led an unprecedented independent life, striving to improve the lives of people all over the world. In 1933, she became the first wife of a president to give her own news conference in the White House. She traveled extensively on her own and was affectionately called "First Lady of the world." She would serve as a U.S. delegate to the United Nations for many years and help write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

OCTOBER 11, 1884



The cornerstone of the **White House** is laid by George Washington in a Masonic ceremony. The building would not be completed until 1800, when President John Adams and his family moved in. Burned by the British in 1814, it would be reconstructed, refurbished and reoccupied in 1817.

OCTOBER 13, 1792

