

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 48TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA
JUNE 29 – JULY 2, 2021, ST. LOUIS, MO**

Reports of the ten committees and agencies of the PCA along with the Standing Committees of the Assembly were presented. Items thought to be of interest are summarized below.

Tuesday, June 29th

1. Worship Service, with communion, by the previous Moderator, Hon. Howard Donahoe.
2. Dr. Roy Taylor was elected moderator.
3. A quorum was established with 567 REs and 1366 TEs present. (The total number of commissioners present was subsequently reported as 2092.)

Wednesday, June 30th

4. Assembly Wide Seminar, “The PCA We Envision for Christ’s Purposes,” with panelists Michael Allen, Brian Habig, Chuck Garriott, Julius Kim, Phil Ryken, and Thurman Williams. Click [here](#) for video. The seminar begins at 21:35 with an introduction by Bryan Chapell.
5. Due to declining health of Dr. Keller, the report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality was presented by Tim and Kevin DeYoung via video. The committee’s report is in agreement with the 2017 Nashville Statement but with pastoral language in place of “denials”. A comparison of the most contentious of the 12 statements in the report with corresponding article from the Nashville Statement follows:

Statement 9 of the Ad Interim Report with scripture references removed for brevity:

We affirm that the believer’s most important identity is found in Christ. Christians ought to understand themselves, define themselves, and describe themselves in light of their union with Christ and their identity as regenerate, justified, holy children of God. To juxtapose identities rooted in sinful desires alongside the term “Christian” is inconsistent with Biblical language and undermines the spiritual reality that we are new creations in Christ.

Nevertheless, being honest about our sin struggles is important. While Christians should not identify with their sin so as to embrace it or seek to base their identity on it, Christians ought to acknowledge their sin in an effort to overcome it. That is, we name our sins, but are not named by them. Moreover, we recognize that there are

some secondary identities, when not rooted in sinful desires or struggles against the flesh, that can be legitimately affirmed along with our primary identity as Christians. For example, the distinctions between male and female, or between various nationalities and people groups, are not eradicated in becoming Christians, but serve to magnify the glory of God in his plan of salvation.

Article 7 of the Nashville statement:

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

6. The evening worship service was led by Rev. Russ Whitfield, Grace Mosaic, Northeast DC. Jonah 4:9 paraphrased, "Grace for me but karma for all you Ninevites!" An illustration of each of the three sermons was prepared by Rachael McIntosh, Communications Intern, First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, SC. A sample is included at bottom.

Thursday, July 1st

7. Dr. Bryan Chapell was elected Stated Clerk of the PCA succeeding Dr. Roy Taylor. Dr. Taylor had served as the Stated Clerk of the PCA since 1998. He retired to care for his wife, Donna, who is suffering from Alzheimer's.
8. The Assembly voted to answer Overture 14, to revise the MTW Manual to include the statement: "all MTW leaders in line authority over church planting or church development ministry shall be ordained elders", over the objection of the MTW coordinator. The vote was 961 to 814.
9. The Assembly voted to answer Overtures 38 commending the Ad Interim Report on Human Sexuality in the affirmative.
10. The Assembly voted to answer Overture 23, "Amend BCO 16, Doctrine of Vocation, by Adding a Clause Which Prohibits Ordination for Men Who Self-Identify as 'Gay Christians,' 'Same-sex Attracted Christians,' 'Homosexual Christians,' or Like Terms" in the affirmative as amended. The vote was 1438-417. The amended language follows:

16-4 Officers in the Presbyterian Church in America must be above reproach in their walk and Christlike in their character. Those who profess an identity (such as, but not limited to, "gay Christian," "same sex attracted Christian," "homosexual Christian," or like terms) that undermines or contradicts their identity as new creations in Christ, either by denying the sinfulness of fallen desires (such as, but not limited to, same sex attraction), or by denying the reality and hope of progressive sanctification, or by

failing to pursue Spirit-empowered victory over their sinful temptations, inclinations, and actions are not qualified for ordained office.

11. The Assembly voted to answer Overture 37 "Amend BCO 21-4 and 24-1 Clarifying Moral Requirements for Church Office," in the affirmative as amended. The vote was 1130-692. The added paragraph [e] follows:

In the examination of the candidate's personal character, the presbytery should give specific attention to potentially notorious concerns, such as but not limited to relational sins, sexual immorality (including homosexuality, fornication, and pornography), addictions, abusive behavior, and financial mismanagement. Careful reflection should be given to his practical struggle against sinful actions, as well as persistent sinful desires. The candidate shall give clear testimony of his reliance upon his union with Christ and the benefits thereof by the Holy Spirit, depending on this work of grace to make progress over sin and to bear fruit. [While imperfection will remain, he should not be known by reputation or self-profession according to his remaining sinfulness (e.g., homosexual desires, etc.), but rather by the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus.] In order to maintain discretion and protect the honor of the pastoral office, the presbytery may empower a committee to conduct detailed examination into these matters and to give prayerful support to candidates.

A minority report from the Committee of Commissioners that proposed to remove the sentence in brackets was defeated. The BCO changes will become effective if approved by two thirds of the presbyteries.

12. The Assembly voted (1374-107) to answer Overture 48, "Repudiate Anti-Asian Racism," with the following statement:

"The Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation to the 46th General Assembly speaks clearly both to the reality of the Imago Dei in all people and to the sin of racism, particularly when it affirms: a) the vision of the redeemed in Revelation 7:9-11, where all nations and ethnicities are fulfilled in Christ; b) the image of God reflected in all people; and c) the image of Christ reflected in His body. At the same time, we recognize the pain, and, at times, violence, that the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community has experienced, particularly due to events of the past year. We express our grief together with our AAPI brothers and sisters over the pain and suffering that has occurred, whether this has happened due to unbiblical religious claims, racist pride, or any other cause. We, finally, assure our AAPI brothers and sisters of our love and support, and of our desire to walk together in ways that reflect the commitments of the Racial Reconciliation Report."

13. The evening worship service was led by Dr. Abraham Cho, Redeemer East Side, NY.

Greetings were extended from:

Ron Brown, Bradley Barnes, Paul Hahn, and Rob Fossett.

Illustration by Rachael McIntosh, Communications Intern, First Pres Columbia.

