

GA226 Overview

The work of the 226th General Assembly (GA226) began with online committee sessions on June 25 – June 27, 2024.

There are 14 committees. Each committee met via Zoom to discern recommendations on the items of business they were given. I was assigned to the Financial Resource Committee (FIN).

The committees reviewed specific Overtures for approval or disapproval. Overtures are items of business approved by a presbytery or synod requesting a particular action of the General Assembly.

The Financial Resource Committee was made up of a Moderator, Vice-Moderator, 34 Commissioners, and 8 Advisory Delegates. We reviewed 20 items of business during the three days of work.

The Plenary Sessions of the GA226 took place at the Salt Palace Convention Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, June 30 – July 4, 2024.

GA226 included 456 commissioners from across the country, plus advisory delegates, presbytery and synod representatives, along with visitors, volunteers, and media.

Each day began with a Worship Service. The first work session opened with various administrative items including orientation, establishing quorum, commissioning of Commissioners and Advisory Delegates, and officer reports. A consent agenda, which determined the business to be considered by the General Assembly, was established per the Standing Rules of the General Assembly.

I am highlighting below the items which I found very significant which occurred during GA226:

Election of co-moderators

Rev. Cecelia Armstrong and Rev. Tony Larson are elected and installed as co-moderators of the 226th General Assembly. They were elected on the first ballot on Sunday by a 249-171 count over Rev. Danny Morales and Rev. Dr. Marian McClure Taylor. They called that a symbol of working together for the good of the Church and those it serves.

Election of the new Stated Clerk

Rev. Jihyun Oh, director of Mid Council Ministries in the Office of the General Assembly, was elected and then installed as the next Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). She called for giving thanks for and letting go of past ways of being church that are no longer helpful.

Divest for Military Occupations

The Assembly passed a Commissioners' Resolution to divest from direct support to the Israeli government's military operations. This is part of a new commitment to not invest in governmental debt of nations cited by the United Nations for involvement in long military occupations of another people. The Assembly also directed the Mission Responsibility Through Investment program (MRTI) to engage with GE and Palantir on the use of their engines in Apache helicopters and other products involved in human rights abuse in the Gaza war, Yemen, and China. MRTI will report back at the next GA for possible divestment from these two companies.

Fossil Fuel Divestment

Following a successful vote to divest from all fossil fuel companies, the GA reversed itself a few hours later and took an approach to engage companies instead. The assembly approved ENV-02, an overture to divest from the fossil fuel industry, then later disapproved it and replaced it with the softer measure, ENV-06.

MRTI will continue its efforts to reform the fossil fuel industry, in which the PC(USA) national entities hold about \$32.3 million. GA voted to become a "plastic-free" church and supported other environmental actions.

Human Rights

GA voted to recognize March 31 as Transgender Day of Visibility each year.

The Olympia Overture

POL-01, which had been divided into two parts, will amend the Book of Order to include sexual orientation and gender identity among the categories against which this Church does not discriminate. The action balances theological diversity with protection for all persons in the ordination process. A majority vote of presbyteries is needed for the change to pass.

On Supporting an Amendment to the United States Constitution to Abolish the Exception in the 13th Amendment that Permits Those Who are Convicted of a Crime to be Enslaved

A "Slavery Punishment Clause" is still found in the Constitution. DOE-02 calls for support of Senate Resolution 33 and House Resolution 72, stating: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude may be imposed as a punishment for a crime."

Gun Violence Prevention

The overture "DOE-03 An Overture Calling for Action so that Children May Live Free from Gun Violence" passed 424-0 with moving witness testimony from advocates and commissioners.

PCUSA Plans

The offering number was reduced from four to three and moved to cause-based instead of program-based beneficiaries.

The Assembly approved a report on PC(USA) Special Offerings to change the Peace and Global Witness Offering into a broader World Communion Offering. Rather than retaining a portion for local mission, congregations will be able to apply for peacemaking grants.

Recognizing Korean church caucus over women's mistreatment

The Korean churches in the PC(USA) comprise about 330 churches and 40,000 members, which makes the National Caucus of Korean Presbyterian Churches (NCKPC) the second largest group after the African American or Black Caucus. The General Assembly affirmed the decision of the General Assembly Entity Coordination (GAEC) committee to disapprove the establishment of a new entity by a vote of 379-27. It was felt there was no need for duplication of the oversight of already established caucuses.

Financial Considerations

Commissioners agreed to per capita levels for 2025 and 2026 and approved the unifying budgets for both years. As a result of financial implications the new General Assembly per capita amounts for 2025 will show an increase of .64 cents from \$10.20 to \$10.84 and per capita amounts for 2026 will increase .64 cents from \$10.62 to \$11.26.

Young Adult Advisory Delegates participation

Eighty-two YAADs from across the country assisted in providing views on each item of discussion. Their input was extremely beneficial and contributed to the important considerations of all votes.

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