

227th General Assembly Commissioners

Report to the Presbytery
Reflection Questions on GA227
July 28, 2026

Ruling Elder Duane Boone, Carver Memorial (Climate and Environmental Justice Committee)

I had the opportunity to serve as a Commissioner, representing PEVA, at the 227th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA, held in Milwaukee Wisconsin. During the time at General Assembly, I was able to meet and work with other church commissioners from all over the country; and by discerning God's will through prayer and worship, we were able to discuss and address various overtures that were brought before the General Assembly for consideration and resolution.

Below are answers to questions regarding my experiences at General Assembly.

1. "What was an impactful memory from GA227 for you?"
 - When I walked into the first plenary session, I was impressed by the number of people who were in the room. When you are doing the work of the church at the local level, you tend to forget how big the denomination is and how much of a spiritual impact it has on so many people. Being at the General Assembly reminded me of the broad reach and influence of the Presbyterian Church USA, and the work it does to meet spiritual and secular needs of the global community in which we live.
 - I was impressed by the other Christian denominations that brought greetings at the beginning in the plenary sessions. I was particularly impressed with Rev. Dr. Kevin Vandiver, a Lutheran minister, who provided the sermon for the ecumenical service.
2. "Where did you see the Holy Spirit during GA 227?"
 - The Holy spirit was evident at the Wauwatosa Presbyterian Church in Wauwatosa Wisconsin. The members of the congregation greeted us warmly and treated us like long lost friends.
 - The Holy Spirit was also evident during the Plenary Sessions of the General Assembly. I got the general impression that a lot of personal agendas were being promoted through motions being presented during the plenary sessions and during subsequent debate, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, personal agendas were set aside in favor of decisions that implemented the will of God.
 - The worship service at the beginning of Plenary Sessions were able to set the tone for the work that was being conducted by those assembled to do the work of the church.
3. "What are some important decisions commissioners voted on this GA?"
 - Approving the consent agenda. In doing so, the commissioners recognized the work of the committees during the previous week; and allowed the assembly to focus on overtures that needed the full consideration by the full assembly.
 - The Budget for PCUSA going forward. While various aspects of the budget were being debated/discussed, I got the feeling that we were in a big Session meeting and discussions/debates felt very familiar.
 - I thought the discussions related to Theological Education and Ordination were important. Educational standards for Teaching Elders must always be given careful consideration and close examination before changing them. The one of the hallmarks of the Presbyterian Church USA, and one I certainly appreciate, is an educated Clergy.
 - The decision to have the 228th General Assembly in Puerto Rico.
 - The Election of the next two moderators for PCUSA.

4. "Moving forward, what would you like PEVA to know about GA227?"
 - The Presbyterian Church USA is a large Protestant denomination with global influence. Commissioners come from all over the country to tackle spiritual/secular issues by discerning God's will. Such topics are as follows: Climate and Environmental Justice (mine); Theological Education and Ordination, Financial Stewardship and Witness, Reformed Identity Around the World, Reformed Identity in the United States, General Assembly Operations, and General Assembly Relationships, to name a few. The church encompasses religious thought, from the conservative right to the progressive left, and all that is in the middle of the two extremes.
5. "Who did you encounter at general assembly that had an impact on you as a connectional church"
 - I thought the co-moderators were good at managing the plenary sessions. They were able to manage the sessions in a manner that ensured different perspectives were given an opportunity to be heard; and were able to maintain a safe space where all participants felt comfortable expressing themselves without fear of public ridicule. Having this space was critical for ensuing church business was conducted decently and in order.
 - I inadvertently met commissioners from Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Maryland, the church my family attended during my youth. After introducing myself to them, they fondly remembered my parents. It was somewhat a full circle moment for me because my faith journey as a Christian and a member of the Presbyterian church began at Madison Ave.
 - General Assembly Volunteers throughout the week, who were so helpful. From meeting attendees at the airport to greeting us at the plenary sessions, their presence and efforts during the assembly were greatly appreciated.

The Reverend Michelle "Mike" Burcher, Honorably Retired (Theological and Ordination Committee)

1. "What was an impactful memory from GA227 for you?"

Walking into the conference hall for the first plenary session, I was amazed and overjoyed at the rich diversity represented. Our PEVA meetings have a lot of older black and white folks; the General Assembly looked and sounded more like what I think of Christ's true church – many ages, races, languages, gender identities and abilities.

Personally, I was privileged to make an amendment that led to passing an important motion. The change ensures that Committees for the Preparation for Ministry would receive training to make that process more consistent and helpful to persons discerning a call to ministry of Word and Sacrament. Little ol' me making a difference amidst a sea of commissioners.

I also came away with a deep respect for Robert's Rules and parliamentarians. Without that order, a body that size would rarely be able to make any decisions. Instead, everyone was able to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit and make recommendations to draw us closer to the will of God.

2. "Where did you see the Holy Spirit during GA 227?"

The worship was meaningful, especially the sermons from folks outside the PC(USA). A good reminder that we are all on the same team.

I don't think many Presbyterians in the pews were aware of the downsizing that has been going on with PC(USA) leadership. Among the changes was the dismantling of the Mission co-worker program, affecting nearly 200 PC(USA) field workers in many

countries. The commissioners learned that the way these faithful people were told they were losing their jobs lacked the dignity and grace we expect from our leadership. A team was created to investigate how this was done and recommend changes so that something like this doesn't happen again.

When folks needed a break during the tense and more complicated decisions, we were treated to some silly dancing to get our blood moving and the laughter bubbling. We're not always as frozen as folks say we are, even though the physical temperature in the room was so frigid we were provided blankets!

3. "What are some important decisions commissioners voted on this GA?"

I served on the committee on Theological Education and Ordination. This group had three significant resolutions that passed:

1. Committees for Preparation for Ministry (CPM) will receive training on how to best serve the students in their care.
2. Candidates will have the option to present a Senior Portfolio in lieu of taking the Ordination exams. This portfolio will showcase their knowledge in the same areas as the tests.
3. A committee is being established to explore new models for ministry, including multiple churches sharing staff. This overture came from PEVA and passed easily.

4. "Moving forward, what would you like PEVA to know about GA227?"

- A small Presbytery still has a big impact.
- Other Christian denominations see us as leaders. We heard "greetings" from a variety of denomination partners, including the Lutherans, Reformed Churches, and Disciples of Christ as well as others from around the world. Without exception, they spoke of the PC(USA) leading the way as we welcome and recognize the value of all people.
- The denomination takes responsibility for its mistakes. Clearly, the changes with the mission co-workers could/should have been handled differently, and now that process is receiving the careful attention it needs.

5. "Who did you encounter at general assembly that had an impact on you as a connectional church?"

I was impressed by the overall maturity and the spiritual maturity of the Young Adult Advisory Delegates (YAADs). Many are discerning a call to ministry; I am glad that the work this Assembly did will have a positive impact on their journey of faith.

Commissioners worshipped with a variety of Milwaukee churches, and I attended Calvary Presbyterian Church, aka "The Big Red Church." When the congregation size dwindled and the last pastor left in 2018, they could not afford to call another pastor. So they leaned into the gifts of their members – they trained the elders to be worship leaders and even commissioned several to celebrate the sacraments. Instead of calling a pastor, they hired a CEO to manage the building as resource to the community. Major repairs were made to the historic building, and the revenue from the weddings, concerts, plays etc. that they host supports the keep up the building. It is a different model for ministry that fits their setting.

We voted to affirm having the next General Assembly in Puerto Rico, AND we voted for a co-moderator from Puerto Rico. Pretty cool...

I very much appreciated serving as a commissioner and enjoyed this opportunity to see and be part of the church at work.

Faithfully submitted,
Mike Burcher

The Rev. Clark DeSarro-Raynal, Hilton Presbyterian Church (Racial Justice Committee)

I thank Hilton Presbyterian Church and Presbytery of Eastern Virginia for the opportunity to serve as a commissioner to the 227th General Assembly of the PC(USA). It was a beautiful experience. Entering the assembly hall was so fun. We were siblings from churches from every part of our country, every ministry of our denomination and with partners from across the world. Imagine the Wi-Fi bandwidth required to host 1000 plus laptop computers! Our hosts were amazing. Milwaukee is cool, and we were all just fine. Yvette, Duane, Elisabeth, Mike and I were ready. We had PEVA friends right behind us >> Lissa, Roxie, Lyndsey, Chris and Donna, and we had all of your prayers. There was dancing and singing, good preaching and worship. We bowed in prayer for God's Spirit to be with us, and we set about the work God gave us to do. There were many overtures. Some passed quickly. Others led faithfully to debate, amendments, substitute motions and amendments to substitute motions. God's work is busy, and so important. Sometimes we really had to dig in. We were patient, confessional, repentant and brave. The work was tough and we grew tired. Our co-moderators were very good. We remembered to stretch and breathe. We stopped when we needed to rest. There was no cheering allowed for any vote if but a single vote went the other way. There was time to differ and to be heard. Again and again, we'd pray. And I am so proud of the work we did.

I served on the Racial Justice Committee. We advanced several recommendations that say no to racism. Of particular note was our work on RAC-04. It advanced the recommendation that Presbytery Life and Witness create a tracking system to review, hold ourselves to account, and see to completion the anti-racism measures previous assemblies have already approved since 1983. Among the proposed amendments to the Book of Order that presbyteries will be considering next year is one that, if passed, will require all ministers, ruling elders, commissioned pastors, inquirers and candidates for ministry, certified and called positions within congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions, to receive anti-racism training. Who will do the training? What will it look like? Resources are coming. Our synods and national offices are on it. But friends, it's up to us. It's up to our councils, our sessions, our ministers and ruling elders. It's good work.

Sunday morning before any plenary work began, we went to church. Donna and I attended worship at Immanuel Church Brookfield seven miles north. Their minister is Max, a seminary friend of ours. It was great to catch up. That church follows Jesus downtown 3-5 days every week! As busy as they are where they are, they're just as busy as God sends them out. They are in their van making rounds, and with partner agencies with food, medicine, Narcan pens, clean needles, counsel and mercy for unsheltered folks, addicts, women who work the night, and folks who are poor. Max has been doing this for 25 years now. He knows every curb and cry. A line from his sermon that day holds me well. He talked about "rejoicing in the sacred edges of the congregation." That's what they do, and so do we.

At GA this year I never saw more honesty and welcome for the edgy work Jesus gives to do. Presbyterians don't ignore sin and evil in the world. We double down on what we know to be God's love in Jesus Christ. We embrace our call to be his followers today. Therefore, we voted overwhelmingly to declare white Christian nationalism to be what it is – a theological error. We declared the killing of thousands of children in Gaza to be what it is – genocide. We're for divestment from companies that do lasting harm to God's creation. We hold to grace, inclusion and

opportunity for all God's children, be they young or old, gay or straight, female, male or non-gender conforming, brown or white. This is the work of Jesus in our world today. Returning home, I've never been prouder of our church. Looking ahead, I pray we rejoice for the sacred edges of our congregations, because there's where Jesus keeps calling us to be. May we all be true. Thanks be to God!

Ms. Elisabeth Writtenberry, Young Adult Advisory Delegate (YAAD), Great Bridge (Reformed Identity Around the World Committee)

1. What was an impactful memory from GA227 for you?

A meaningful memory for me was leading plenary in closing prayer. At first, it felt very intimidating to pray in front of over one thousand people. But once I stepped on stage, I instantly felt the holy spirit moving through me. My nerves went away and knew that I was doing exactly what God had called me to do. The entire experience was very powerful, from writing the prayer with one of my fellow YAAD's, stepping backstage beforehand and seeing all the technology equipment and crew hard at work, and stepping on stage to see GA through another perspective.

2. Where did you see the Holy Spirit during GA227?

For me, it was the little moments throughout the assembly. One morning, I was in a coffee shop and saw two gentlemen behind me with PC(USA) nametags. I simply said hello, and before I knew it, we were sitting together discussing our churches music ministries. It amazes me how God calls us to do small things, such as saying good morning, that then turn into beautiful moments. Another example is the way we did the lord's prayer. We were encouraged to speak it in the language closest to our hearts. What could seem like a small action of inclusion and diversity felt like a powerhouse. It didn't matter that we weren't all in sync with our words and phrasing, what mattered is that all of us were speaking the prayer Jesus taught us to pray.

3. What are some important decisions commissioners voted on this GA?

I was a part of the "Reformed Identity Around the World" committee. We were filled with many heavy topics, including Israel and Palestine. We were given reading materials and a slideshow defining genocide, antisemitism and islamophobia. With faithful discernment, we decided to declare genocide on Israel and encourage a full-trade embargo as well.

4. Moving forward, what would you like PEVA to know about GA227?

It's not as scary as it seems! When I first found out I was going to GA227, I felt very overwhelmed by all the manuals, training materials, and the one and only book of order. However, as soon as you step inside the plenary room, you are surrounded by the holy spirit and the PC(USA) community. This gave me great peace of mind. Another thing that really helped was going to the zoom training sessions. It was super helpful to connect with others who were in the same situation as me and learn together. So if you're interested in attending General Assembly one day but feeling unsure, trust that God will place the right people and resources to help you through it. He did for me.

5. Who did you encounter at general assembly that had an impact on you as a connectional church?

One of my greatest takeaways from this General Assembly was connection. I enjoyed getting to know so many people and creating life-long friendships with my fellow YAAD's as well as commissioners in our presbytery. However, the person who stood out the most to me was the commissioner I sat next to in plenary. Her name is Sommer Bower, who is from the Flint Hill Presbytery in Georgia. From the moment we introduced ourselves in the opening plenary, Sommer quickly wanted to get to know me better and hear more about my faith journey. When I told her about my interest in going to seminary, she encouraged me to not stay within my own backyard and apply to all over the country. This inspired me to stretch beyond my comfort zone throughout the remainder of GA, and to deeply listen to God's calling as I discern which seminary to attend one day.