



Presbytery of Coastal Carolina

A NEW DAY, A NEW WAY – TOGETHER!

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“Cultivating Generosity”

July 1, 2008

TO: Pastors & Clerks of Sessions

Dear friends in Christ,

By the time you read this, we will all have returned from a very busy week attending the 218th General Assembly. Let me say right off how well represented we all were by our Commissioners and Advisory Delegates. They worked hard, prayed long and took their responsibility very seriously.

A complete list of GA actions and referrals are available on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) website, but let me list a small sampling of what happened, and did not happen.

The 218th General Assembly:

- did not change constitutional standards for ordination;
- did not (in the California atmosphere) redefine marriage;
- did open the possibility of “scruples” by a candidate, subject to approval (or not) by the ordaining body;
- did propose a new version of G-6.0106b, by which a candidate would pledge to live a life "obedient to Jesus Christ...striving to follow where He leads through the witness of the Scriptures...and to declare fidelity to the standards of the church...";
- did refer a new Form of Government for additional study;
- did adopt a " Strategy for Church Growth for African American Congregations";
- did resolve a disagreement between GA Council and Presbyterian Foundation with a corporate compromise;
- did elect as Moderator, the Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow; as Vice Moderator, the Rev. Byron Wade (Davie Street Church in Raleigh);
- did have an open discussion of the Iraqi war, with special emphasis on the needs of our active duty forces, families and veterans.

A friend who has attended GA meetings for 20 years describes the 218th as a "non-anxious Assembly, with a keen attention to the Holy Spirit and little evidence of special interest group demonstration or influence". I've heard others describe this one as a 21st century Assembly. That may be, in part, recognizing the visibility and influence of the Youth and Theological Advisory Delegates.

It should be noted that the most controversial issue (G-6.0106b) passed by a vote that was a clear majority (380 to 325), but obviously not overwhelming. That means some have come away from the 218th encouraged, while others are disheartened and disappointed. I come home knowing that my job may become more challenging, while aware of how very important it will be for us to be gracious, and patient and prayerful in reaching out to one another.

Many who spoke against the changed G-6.0106b, said simply, we are not ready, the time is not yet right. Of course, as the Presbyteries vote over the course of this next year, we will know more clearly what is right and who is ready for such a change.

But as I write this, I am remembering how continuous were the calls and prayers - in the Committees and on the floor of General Assembly - for our staying together in the unity of Christ. While it would not be respectful or rational for us to underestimate the significant differences among us within the PCUSA, or within the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, neither would it be helpful for us to circle the wagons and assume a crisis mentality.

Instead, I pray, and solicit your prayers in behalf of our finding and affirming - as the people of God - a sense of Oneness that is beyond us, if need be, in spite of us.

Your servant in Christ,

David

David A. Walker
Interim General Presbyter & Stated Clerk