

Online GA happened! The 224th General Assembly (2020)

From Tricia Dykers Koenig, Associate Stated Clerk, Associate Director for Mid Council Relations, Office of the General Assembly

Many thanks to all who assisted your commissioners and advisory delegates to participate meaningfully in the online General Assembly! Certainly, we all missed the chance to gather and greet one another in Baltimore, with the full experience of committee work, in-person worship, and all the other elements of a traditional General Assembly.

Although not without disappointment, voting participants did validate the decision of the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly that the limited time (due to the reality of zoom fatigue), and the inability to have committees (to sort out complex issues before they came to the plenary), necessitated limiting the business that could be handled faithfully.

However, the assembly also recognized officially that the work of the church—including that represented by the overtures and reports that were deferred until the 225th General Assembly (2022)—is not entirely dependent on decisions of the General Assembly. Included in the approval of Item 00-29 were these points:

- “Direct the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency to review all items of business referred from the 224th General Assembly (2020) to the 225th General Assembly (2022) to consider prayerfully whether the recommendations could be enacted under current social witness policy or the authority of agencies and their boards to make programmatic decisions between assemblies.”
- “Call congregations, sessions, presbyteries, and synods to **review items of business referred from the 224th General Assembly (2020) to the 225th General Assembly (2022) and prayerfully consider the call of God to work and witness for the goals and values expressed therein**, in particular the following items as starting points for developing plans for action in dismantling structural racism at every level of the PC(USA):
 - 02-020, “Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls Task Force Report”
 - 02-034-INFO, “Special Committee on Racism, Truth, and Reconciliation Progress Report with Recommendation”
 - 02-041, “Lazarus Is Walking in Baltimore—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy”
 - 02-084, “A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA)—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee”
 - 02-100, “Approval of Part 1 of the 2021-2022 Mission Work Plan for the Presbyterian Mission Agency—From the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board,” especially the sections on dismantling structural racism”

The list of items referred from the 224th General Assembly (2020) to the 225th General Assembly (2022) can be found at pc-biz.org by selecting Committees from the blue bar at the top, then choosing [02] Referral to the 225th General Assembly (2022) from the dropdown menu. **Please heed the call and lead your congregations and councils in conducting this prayerful review.**

Let's face it, most Presbyterians engage their church life in congregations, some in presbyteries, and fewer at the synod and General Assembly levels. If the church at these other levels is not going to act on these concerns, the statements of the General Assembly will have little effect. No congregation, presbytery, or synod can take on every issue—every congregation and council can take on something. Where is God calling yours?

Another exhortation for mid councils and congregations in Item 00-29:

- “Recommend that PC(USA) congregations, mid councils, and all General Assembly Entities **develop and adopt an antiracism policy** in their bylaws by engaging Item 02-137, ‘On Amending G-3.0106 to Add an Antiracism Policy with Suggested Training for All Members of Each Council.’ This work can be done now at all levels, even in advance of the 225th General Assembly (2022), at which time that General Assembly can act on setting a constitutional requirement to do so if it chooses.”

Although all of the items submitted to General Assembly are important, most of the business considered by the 224th General Assembly (2020) did not include matters specifically directed to mid councils; here are some, in addition to 00-29, that are:

- The per capita rate for 2021 and 2022 will be **\$8.98**—this represents the \$8.95 proposed by OGA and COGA, no change from the current rate due to the recognition of the effects of the pandemic, plus \$.03 from added expenses authorized through actions of the assembly.
- Comments made during the report of the General Assembly Nominating Committee highlighted the great need for Presbyterians to apply to serve on national-level committees, commissions, and task forces. The ability to nominate diverse groups for service is directly dependent on the pool of those who apply. Please encourage talented folks from your area to apply to serve.
- Item 00-95, the Native American Coordinating Council Report,
 - “Encourage[s] mid councils to disburse a portion of the proceeds to Native American ministries when buildings or property are sold, symbolic of good stewardship.”
 - “Encourage[s] the congregations, mid councils, and other groups in the church to develop partnerships with organizations, universities (including PC(USA) seminaries), and Indigenous leaders, addressing key issues important to Indigenous peoples and nations, including:
 1. Effects of intergenerational trauma on Indigenous peoples and communities relating to boarding schools and other assimilationist programs with a particular emphasis on children;
 2. The epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW);
 3. Indigenous food cultivation, preparation, and preservation;
 4. Indigenous responses to environmental crises and environmental racism;

5. Creation of Native American centers, programs, and resources outside of reservations, particularly urban centers (initiatives like Princeton Seminary has taken for students descended of slaves or from underrepresented groups).”
- Item 00-96, the Native American Church Property Report,
 - “Call[s] upon mid councils with Native American churches and chapels in their bounds, as well as churches with partnerships with Native American congregations, to review this report and develop a process for repair and improvement of church properties.”
 - “Call[s] upon mid councils with funds that they hold to improve Native American churches and chapels to engage in funds development for Native American church property repairs, and encourage support for the Native American Church Property Fund established by the Presbyterian Foundation in 2019. The 223rd General Assembly (2018) of the PC(USA) directed the Presbyterian Foundation to create an ongoing fund for Native American Church property urgent and immediate repairs and improvements. Give to this fund.” Since *those of us who are white Presbyterians are all accountable for the legacy from which our Native American family of faith are suffering, this call should not be heard only in the presbyteries where these churches are located, but by us all.*

Administrative Commission on Mid Councils

One action of the assembly for which we particularly need your immediate help: Item 00-19, establishes an administrative commission “authorized to act as the General Assembly upon requests of synods and presbyteries, with the authority of the General Assembly by ‘approving the acts of synods to organize, divide, unite, or combine presbyteries or portions of presbyteries’ according to G-3.0502e.” Because there are several proposals waiting to be reviewed, it is important that this administrative commission be appointed as soon as possible, and for that we need a ***diverse group of ruling and teaching elders to apply.***

Co-Moderators Elona Street-Stewart and Gregory Bentley will use the General Assembly nominations process in order to consider potential members for the Administrative Commission on Mid Councils.

Anyone who feels called to be considered for appointment will need to complete and submit an online application form. **You will find the online application for the Administrative Commission on Mid Councils at ganominations.pcusa.org.**

You will need an account at this site to file an application. If you have not previously used the online portal for nominations, you will need to create an account Contact Judy Mitchell for assistance.