



GA 225

- About 50 more items of business than typical General Assembly meeting. (Many items of business were referred to the 225th by the 224th.)
- Of the 196 items of business, 127 were approved on the consent agenda, so 69 were handled in plenary.
- ***[See Pc-biz.org for resources.]***

Israel / Palestine

- The General Assembly voted 266-116 to approve INT-02, a “Recognition that Israel’s Laws, Policies and Practices Constitute Apartheid Against the Palestinian People.” It declares that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) “recognizes that the laws, policies, and practices of the government of Israel regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid.”

“Apartheid is legally defined as inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of person and systemically oppressing them.”

Assembly Action

On this item, the General Assembly acted as follows:

Approve as Amended

Electronic Vote - Plenary
Affirmative:266
Negative:116
Abstaining:

Final text:

The Presbytery of Grace overtures the 225th General Assembly (2022) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:

1. Recognize that the government of Israel's laws, policies, and practices regarding the Palestinian people fulfill the international legal definition of apartheid. Apartheid is legally defined as inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them. This occurs in Israel/Palestine through:
 - a. Establishing two sets of laws, one for Israelis and one for Palestinians, which give preferential treatment to Israeli Jews and oppressive treatment to Palestinians,
 - b. Expropriating Palestinian land and water for Jewish-only settlements.
 - c. Denying the right to freedom of residence to Palestinians.
 - d. Dividing the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the Palestinians.
 - e. Denying Palestinians the right to a nationality.
2. Urge members, congregations, presbyteries, and national staff units, including the Office of Interfaith Relations, to seek appropriate ways to bring an end to Israeli apartheid.
3. Direct the Stated Clerk to communicate this action to all other PC(USA) councils.

- ***What do you think of that?***
- ***What would you say about the use of the word "apartheid" here?***

COMMENTS:

- **Having spent time in the occupied territories, it's not just apartheid but a long systematic genocide. Saying anything for Palestine is heard as against the state, and therefore antisemitic. The conversation is difficult and long overdue. I agree with the Stated Clerk's position.**
- **20 years ago, I had a Jewish congregation in a church, and back then this topic was extremely contentious. I support the Jewish state of Israel, but there is genocide happening in Palestine.**
- **It's good to state that approaching this subject is not antisemitic.**
- **South Florida is heavily populated by Jewish communities, so it is important to be up to speed on this topic.**
- **This topic is not relevant in my congregation.**
- **Having been to Israel/Palestine, apartheid is a heavy term, there are aspects to it. Reminded me of Alabama of the 1960's. I appreciate this document since we do have a Jewish renter of our facilities.**
- **"If it walks like a duck, talks like a duck, then it's a duck."**
- **Resource: [Stated Clerk Letter](#)**

Fossil Fuel Divestment

- On a vote of 321-54, General Assembly approved FIN-10, which calls for the appointment of a commission to oversee and facilitate the unification of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) into a single agency.
- ***How have you understood the structure of our denomination and the challenges it presents?***
- ***This was approved on a substitute motion that changed the committee recommendation from task force to commission. Your view of that?***

COMMENTS:

- My congregation has light-years between itself and this topic because few do investments. However, everyone has a choice where to buy gas.
- The worry is in losing a place at the table.
- As policy it's fine, but once you start, where does it end? Don't think that duck would hunt here at my church.
- The Board of Pensions follows the MRTI guidelines.
- Our church is adopting an investment policy for socially responsible investments modeled after the GA.

Unification and National Structure

- On a vote of 321-54, General Assembly approved FIN-10, which calls for the appointment of a commission to oversee and facilitate the unification of the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) into a single agency.
- ***How have you understood the structure of our denomination and the challenges it presents?***
- ***This was approved on a substitute motion that changed the committee recommendation from task force to commission. Your view of that?***

COMMENTS:

- At GA225, the rivalry between the two camps was revealed and discussed. There was also a real fear around combining the two, and that black leadership would lose its voice.
- The systemic problems are old and deep, well beyond racial identifications.
- Remembering last week's TT, it seems that there is a lot of examining happening at this level.
- We have a top-heavy bureaucracy, and this work is long overdue in streamlining.
- Visiting various presbyteries, I found a lot of animosity toward per capita.
- This a fourth attempt...it's a long time coming.
- We must change if we are to be here in 30, 40, 50 years.

Unified Budget / Per Capita

- Unified Budget: 88.3M 2023; 89.5M 2024 (with 16% OGA, 79% PMA, 5% ASG).
- GA Per Capita: 2023: \$9.85; 2024: \$9.80 (2022 \$8.98).
- ***What do you think of per capita as a funding source?***
- ***What about churches that are not paying their full share? (Recall that presbyteries have to make up the difference.)***

COMMENTS:

- I don't find it a good funding model. I talk about it as a mission sharing contribution to my congregation. I take issue that it is mandatory, like a tax. Some people call it dues. I don't think it sends the right message.
- I don't think we should call it a tax.
- Our regular attenders are not the givers, and we avoid calling it Per Capita, but rather a type of mission giving.
- Your Presbytery would not exist on Per Capita alone, but uses reserves.
- I see it as our tithe.
- I see it as a responsibility to support the greater Church. It needs to be tied into membership.
- Time to clean up our rolls to have a clear picture from where to start.
- People normally would be willing to pay, when it is explained properly. Our Per Capita envelopes are available in the pew for the first four months of the year.
- It's disconcerting to me when I see the Presbytery's financials where Per Capita is not being paid by the larger churches. It's a bill that needs to be paid.
- Many of our attenders are not Presbyterians, so this pitch is hard to sell.
- I would appreciate seeing a breakdown of the monies.
- I fear that the denomination needs to be aware that there is and will be a decline in membership and denominational interest.
- Our Presbytery cannot exist on the Per Capita alone – the Shared Mission giving is very low.

Miscellaneous

- Immigration: IMM-06 declares the PCUSA a "Sanctuary and Accompaniment Church."
- Gun Violence: 10-year campaign, the Decade to End Gun Violence
- Ukraine: Call for cease-fire and negotiations.
- ***What do these topics spark in your setting?***
- ***In what way is it helpful for our denomination to speak to these issues?***

Race and Gender Justice

- Commissioners and advisory delegates approved several items of business from the Race and Gender Justice Committee (RGJ), including RGJ-07: "A Resolution Addressing the Lack of Installed Pastoral Leadership in People of Color Congregations in the PC(USA) — From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee" and RGJ-08: "On Offering an Apology to African Americans for the Sin of Slavery and Its Legacy."

- A two-hour plenary ended with votes overwhelmingly approving both items, and with white Presbyterians reading aloud “A Litany of Repentance” found in RGJ-08, which begins with the words: “As white Christians we repent of our complicity in the belief in white supremacy.”

A LITANY OF REPENTANCE

As white Christians we repent of our complicity in the belief in white supremacy: the belief that people of European descent are superior in intelligence, skills, imagination, and perseverance. We acknowledge that this belief in white supremacy has been the foundation of, and an excuse for, atrocities against people of African descent in the United States and in the world.

We repent of our failure to recognize and take responsibility for the legacy of slavery.

We repent of the injustice, pain, humiliation, and suffering imposed on African Americans by our ancestors and ourselves through actions and inaction. We repent of our complicity in failing to act in mutual loving relationship.

We repent of closing our eyes to the degradation and injustice forced upon African Americans who were enslaved, segregated, terrorized, and imprisoned.

We repent of covering our ears to the crying of families torn apart, to the sound of human flesh being struck, while songs of freedom and heavenly grace flow from our lips.

We repent that we have failed as an institution and as individuals to use our voices to abhor and end lynching, segregation, and racial profiling. We regret our generations of silence on these issues so that we could maintain a comfortable life in our churches, homes, and communities.

We repent of shutting our hearts to the experiences of fellow humans whose stories of pain, suffering, hardship, struggle, love, and joy mirror our own life journeys, yet are deprived of privilege and marred by racism. We have turned our backs and walked away pretending not to see, yet we saw, pretending not to know, yet we knew, and convincing ourselves that we were not complicit, yet we are.

We now know that we as white Christians have benefitted directly and indirectly from these injustices. We name ourselves as complicit and repent.

Finally, we repent of our violent actions to suppress Black agency. African Americans, since the time of slavery, have actively pursued their freedom ... built this country ... laid foundational structures ... and demonstrated their capacity to fully participate in the construction of this American society in spite of white supremacy.

As repentance means turning and going the other way, with Christ's help we seek to do so. At the same time, we commit ourselves to walking with people of African descent toward the goal of healing, reconciliation, and eliminating racism as we seek to dismantle white privilege.

- ***Where and when might this litany be used?***
- ***In what ways is it helpful?***

COMMENTS:

- ***This was a very moving portion at GA. I am looking to bring this litany to our congregation somehow.***
- ***This is not something that will change without intentionality.***
- ***If I use this litany, people will get up and leave the church. But I do believe that it could be used for good conversation.***
- ***Start with education, before there is repentance.***

226th General Assembly

- The assembly voted to change the format of the 226th General Assembly, whereby committee meetings will be held online, with in-person plenaries being conducted on site in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 2024. The assembly is expected to cost approximately \$2.8 million.
- (an all in-person GA costs \$3.6 million)
- ***What do you think of this change?***
- ***How is your council of the church doing work? In-person? On-line? Hybrid? What's optimal?***

Proposed Changes to the BoO

- 30 proposed amendments to the Book of Order
- An entire replacement for the Rules of Discipline
- ***How should Tropical Florida handle our consideration of that many recommendations?***
- ***Would you attend a called meeting for that purpose?***

COMMENTS:

- It seems that it's needed, with or without incentive.
- A summary provided beforehand would be helpful (without recommendations).
- I'd like to see a bit of education prior in some format, especially in the use of language that is harmful and not permissible.
- Maybe split the time between two days.
- This work will need to be done between November 2022 and April 2023.

Along the Way...

1. Breathe deep.
2. Keep your shoes on when you get home.
3. Cooking is a creative activity.
4. Ask: Where do I see God in all this?

