

Lehigh Presbytery News

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June 28, 2016

PC(USA) leaders issue post-General Assembly letter to the church

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3



Brothers and sisters in Christ, there is a new season in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as witnessed by the actions of the 222nd General Assembly (2016). The body of 594 commissioners who gathered June 18-25 in Portland, Oregon, elected Co-Moderators Denise Anderson and Jan Edmiston, and J. Herbert Nelson as the Stated Clerk. Both were historic, and both signal a new way forward for our church.

The business decisions made by the body also were transformative for the 1,572,660 members and 9,642 churches of the PC(USA). The work wasn't easy, and involved careful deliberations. Collectively, the body acted on nearly 100 overtures by discerning the will of Christ.

Among other things, we now have a new addition to our *Book of Confessions* – the Confession of Belhar. It is the first of our confessions that comes from the global south. And, the PC(USA) has a new Directory for Worship; and Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Procedures. God is truly guiding us to be more faithful and just to all of God's creations.

Much discussion has been taking place around the identity and purpose of the denomination, and this week the assembly voted to create a 12-member Way Forward Commission “to study and identify a vision for the structure and function of the General Assembly agencies of the PC(USA),” and a 15-member 2020 Vision Team to “develop a guiding statement for the denomination and make a plan for its implementation.”

To quote Stated Clerk-elect J. Herbert Nelson, “We are not dead ... we are alive, we are reforming and we are transforming this world, one person at a time.”

Looking outward, the assembly voted to engage in selective, phased divestment from fossil-fuel companies through the PC(USA)'s Mission Responsibility Through Investment committee, and re-affirmed a two-state solution for Israel-Palestine.

Please know this is only a snapshot of the actions taken, and just a glimpse at where God is leading this denomination. Complete business actions can be viewed at www.pc-biz.org.

We are, brothers and sisters, in a new season. It's exciting, but also a little scary. Yet in the midst of it all, take comfort that God is still guiding and controlling all – and we need not fear. God is calling us to hope, and to God be the glory!

The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

The Reverend Denise Anderson and the Reverend Jan Edmiston
Co-Moderators of the 222nd General Assembly (2016)

Ruling Elder Tony De La Rosa
Interim Executive Director, Presbyterian Mission Agency

First co-moderators elected: Anderson/Edmiston first female slate

Excerpt from the June 18, 2016 article in the *Presbyterian Outlook* by [Leslie Scanlon](#)

On the first ballot, the 2016 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) elected on June 18 the team of T. Denise Anderson and Jan Edmiston as its co-moderators – choosing leaders who say they want to “cast a vision of hope for the church we love dearly” and who have challenged Presbyterians to realize that change is both inevitable and can be a force for good.



That election marks the first time the assembly has elected co-moderators – and the first time the slate chosen has ever consisted of two women.

Edmiston told the assembly that some suggested this was a hard time – the wrong time – to stand for co-moderator. “Congregations are leaving. Gradye Parsons is retiring – we’ll be electing a brand-new stated clerk. Everything is in transition” – and that’s exactly why she and Anderson decided to stand for co-moderators, because “God works best in times of transition and chaos and anxiety. That is the time the Spirit shows us what God can do.”

This election of co-moderators – rather than a moderator and a vice-moderator – is noteworthy for several reasons.

For one, it’s a first – a new practice which the 2014 General Assembly enabled by changing the rules, allowing candidates to choose whether to stand for election as co-moderators or in the traditional moderator and vice-moderator roles.

Second, it’s a chance for innovation, as the co-moderators can decide for themselves how to best use their gifts and time and divide up responsibilities.

And third, this is the first time an assembly has elected a slate of two women to serve in moderatorial leadership. When women have served as moderators or vice moderators previously, there’s always been a man on the ticket as well.

To read the entire article visit <https://pres-outlook.org/2016/06/first-co-moderators-elected-anderstonedmiston-elected-first-ballot/>

J. Herbert Nelson is new PC(USA) stated clerk

Excerpt from *Leslie Scanlon’s* article in the *Presbyterian Outlook*- June 24, 2016



The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has elected a new stated clerk: J. Herbert Nelson II – a third-generation Presbyterian pastor, a prophetic voice for justice. Nelson issued a call to Presbyterians stop focusing on internal church disputes, numerical survival, and labeling each other as progressives or conservatives, and to focus on “the impact God can make through us” in a broken world.

“I believe we are not dying,” Nelson told the 2016 General Assembly. “I believe we are reforming.”

On the first ballot, the assembly voted overwhelming 447 to 112 to elect Nelson – the official nominee and the director of the PC(USA)'s Office of Public Witness – over challenger David M. Baker, stated clerk of the Presbytery of Tampa and its director of communications.

Nelson will serve as the PC(USA)'s top ecclesiastical and constitutional officer, representing the denomination in interfaith and ecumenical settings.

During a question-and-answer session, Nelson told the assembly that the PC(USA) “can no longer be a 93 percent white denomination moving into the future and expect to grow.”

Presbyterians of different backgrounds need to be in conversation with one another – building relationships and recognizing that “we are not homogeneous in the way we think about Jesus Christ or the world.”

He challenged Presbyterians to “move beyond church walls into the streets” and to get involved in creating jobs and feeding the hungry and taking on concerns about police violence and racial injustice in St. Louis and Baltimore – where the next two General Assemblies will be held.

To read the entire article visit: <https://pres-outlook.org/2016/06/j-herbert-nelson-new-pcusa-stated-clerk/>

Final plenary session of the 222nd General Assembly passes increases to per capita

Excerpt taken from the June 25, 2016 article in the Presbyterian Outlook by Jill Duffield

Late at night on Friday, June 24, two committees – the committee on General Assembly Operations and the Mission Coordination committee – met to count the costs of the actions the assembly passed.



In plenary on the morning of Saturday, June 25, the final financial implications for the work the assembly has instructed the Office of General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency to do were presented: an increase of \$0.17 per capita in 2017 and \$0.18 per capita in 2018. Per capita is a per-member payment each congregation is expected to pay the Presbyterian Church

(U.S.A.). The Office of the General Assembly says per capita is the means of “sharing costs that belong to the whole church.”

The per capita increases related to decisions of the 2016 General Assembly are only part of the per capita increases for 2017 and 2018 which congregations will be asked to pay. In February, the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Board had jointly approved a resolution to ask the assembly to increase the per capita rate by 3 percent in 2017 and another 3 percent in 2018.

That increase is built on the assumption that the PC(USA) will lose 75,000 members in both 2017 and 2018. And it's an effort to avoid further budget cuts at the Office of the General Assembly that the recommendation states would “compromise our ability to effectively serve the church as we are mandated.”

To read the entire article visit: <https://pres-outlook.org/2016/06/final-plenary-session-222nd-general-assembly-passes-increases-per-capita/>

222nd General Assembly bulletin inserts

help you share news with your congregation

The Presbytery has purchased the use of the bulletin inserts for our churches from the Presbyterian Outlook. The post-GA bulletin inserts were sent to each church in both regular and large print by mail or email. You may make as many copies as you need.

2016 Presbyterian Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study

The 120 year old *Presbyterian Mission Yearbook for Prayer & Study* has transformed to a new digital-only resource. By offering this as a free resource through our website, we are able to broaden its reach, share inspiring content in a timelier manner, and demonstrate better stewardship.

Click the link to read the daily Mission Yearbook article.
<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/yearbook/>



Strawberry Shortcake



The First Presbyterian Church of Lehighton will be serving strawberries, layered with cake, ice cream and Topped with whipped cream for **\$4.00**, on **Saturday, July 2, 2016** from **12 noon to 9 p.m.** or until they sell out.

Come enjoy your strawberry shortcake in the comfort of their air conditioned fellowship hall. The church is handicapped accessible by using the ramp on Mahoning Street.

**First Presbyterian Church, 304 Mahoning Street, Lehighton, PA
610-377-5111**

YARD SALE

The Zion United Presbyterian Church will be holding a yard sale

July 8 & 9, 2016

Come browse the tables and pick up some wonderful treasures.

Zion Presbyterian Church, Water Street, Wind Gap, PA 18091



40th Anniversary of the Hiker's Ministry

The Presbyterian Church of the Mountain will be celebrating the 40th Anniversary of their Hiker's Ministry on July 17, 2016 during their worship service.

Watch for more details as they become available and join them on this joyous occasion.

Presbyterian Church of the Mountain, Main Street, Delaware Water Gap, PA
570-476-0345 <http://www.churchofthemountain.org/>

Summer Music Institute 2016 - The Gospel Feast July 28-29, 2016

Come sing, dance, praise and eat at the table of worship that satisfies the soul and revives the spirit. A new format with experts in music, movement, liturgy, and ritual offers a new Summer Music Institute experience this year!



During this July 28-29 event, we will have Emily Scott of [St. Lydia's](#) among us to teach us about her dinner church model and why it works in her context. We will even "do" dinner church together - preparing and serving a meal together as a worship experience! In addition to Emily's presence with us, we will have experts in sacred music, the use of digital technology, dance, and visual art with us to talk about how each of these things can be used to enhance the worshipping life of a church.

All clergy and laity are invited to attend this year's Institute. We have especially low pricing for church groups and encourage worship teams and YOUTH to attend. Below, please find a brief announcement you may include in your communiques, or simply forward this email on to anyone you think might like to attend.

For more information or to register, visit: <http://www.drew.edu/theological/programs-of-study/conferences-lectures/smi/>

Drew Theological School, 36 Madison Avenue, Madison, NJ 07940
973-408-3084 - <http://www.drew.edu/theological/>

Presentations at Luther Crest

The public is cordially invited to attend the following presentations in Crest Hall of Luther Crest, 800 Hausman Road, Allentown, PA 18104:

- Dr. Manfred Bahmann on *"In Bondage to Sin? Luther's Concept of Free Will"*: Tuesday, July 19, 2016 at 2:30 p.m.
- Dr. William Jennings on *"Religions of the Presidential Candidates"*: Tuesday, September 20, 2016 at 2:30 p.m.

Luther Crest Hosts "Theology, Literature, and Coffee"

Luther Crest will host a Moravian Theological Seminary-sponsored course, *"Theology, Literature and Coffee"* (TLC), which will be held at Luther Crest, 800 Hausman Road, Allentown, on Mondays, October 3, 17, and 31, 2016, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Enjoy a time of learning and fellowship as theological themes in selected literature are presented and discussed. Cost for the series is \$20 with early registration discount before September 19 (\$25 after 9/19/16), and beverages will be provided. To register, please contact Moravian Theological Seminary (610-861-1516) or <http://www.moravianseminary.edu/continuing-ed>

Books to be discussed are:

- Oct. 3:** *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee ISBN-10: 0446310786
Leader: Nelson Quinones, St. John Lutheran Church, Fogelsville
- Oct. 17:** *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines ASIN: B00E31IHG6
Leader: Ruth Marcon, First Presbyterian Church, Allentown
- Oct. 31:** *Cry, the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton ASIN: B009O35AXQ
Leader: Nelvin Vos, St. John Lutheran Church, Allentown

Speakers Available

Luther Crest has a variety of speakers available to speak to congregations, adult Sunday School classes, organizations such as women's and men's groups, Bible studies, seniors groups, and youth groups. Topics include: Alzheimer's Disease/Dementia, Depression, Elder Care, Caring for the Caregiver, Senior Housing Options, Continuum of Care, Living with Loss/Grief Support, Communicating during Times of Conflict, Prayer, Scripture Studies. For more information or to schedule a speaker, please contact Rev. Dianne Kareha, Diakon Chaplain for Luther Crest (610-391-8210).

Session or Other Group Retreat or Meeting at Luther Crest

We invite your congregation's Session or other group to hold a retreat or one of its meetings at Luther Crest. To learn more or to schedule a retreat or meeting at Luther Crest (with meals optional), please contact Rev. Dianne Kareha, Diakon Chaplain for Luther Crest (610-391-8210).

For questions or more information on the above, please contact:

Rev. Dianne Kareha, Diakon Chaplain for Luther Crest, 800 Hausman Road, Allentown, PA 18104
610-391-8210 karehad@diakon.org www.diakon.org

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC WANTED



Highland Presbyterian Church of Lancaster, PA is seeking a Director of Music as part of its program staff. The Director of Music will be a creative, visionary, and dynamic leader responsible for establishing a vibrant music ministry that enhances worship and provided spiritual nurture through a varied and inspiring music program. Non-exempt,

Part -time, Program Staff

Please visit : www.highlandpc.org/resources/employment for full job description and how to apply.

Important Federal Court Ruling on Failure to Report Child Abuse

Published in *Church Law & Tax Report, January/February 2016, pg. 12, Senior Editor Richard R. Hammar, Christianity Today, publisher.*

A federal court in Pennsylvania ruled that a local church and denominational agency could be sued on the basis of the legal principle of *negligence per se* by a victim of child abuse as a result of their failure to report. This means that a mandatory child abuse reporter's failure to comply with a state child abuse reporting law's requirement to report a known or reasonably suspected incident of child abuse would render that person automatically liable for monetary damages without a need for the victim to prove actual negligence. [Doe v. Liberatore, 478 F.Supp.2d 742 (M.D. pa 2007)]

Revised Overtime Rules

Under a new Department of Labor (DOL) rule announced by the White House on May 18, 2016, updated regulations on overtime pay will go into effect on December 1, 2016.

If an employee is exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act ("FLSA"), their employer is not required to pay overtime compensation of one and a half times their regular pay. Currently, to qualify for the white collar exemption to overtime pay, the employee must meet certain tests regarding their executive, administrative or professional job duties and must be paid on a salary basis of not less than \$455 per week, or \$23,660 per year.

The new regulations raise the salary threshold to \$913 per week, or \$47,476 annually. This more than doubles the current salary threshold and is estimated to extend overtime pay to an additional 4.2 million workers in the United States.

What this means is that an employee who previously met the criteria for an exemption, but whose salary falls below the new threshold of \$913 per week must be paid overtime at one and one-half the regular rate of pay for all hours worked in excess of 40 per work week. For example, an office worker performing bona fide administrative duties who is paid an annual salary of \$30,000 is not entitled to overtime pay under the current structure, but will be eligible under the new regulations. The worker must record his or her time work to receive pay for one and a half times their hourly rate for work in excess of 40 hours per week. Note that there is no provision for compensatory ("comp") time in lieu of overtime pay under federal law.

The applicability of these provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Acts ("FSLA") to religious organizations is not entirely clear. While church legal authorities generally advise that the FSLA applies to churches,

there is authority from the DOL that lists clergy and religious workers as one of six categories of occupations exempt from the FLSA's overtime provisions. It is anticipated that further guidance will be provided by the time the updated regulations go into effect.

Churches and other religious organizations may wish to consult with their legal and/or financial advisors to discuss the potential impact of the new overtime regulations on their ministry operations and budget effective December 1, 2016.

For additional information, check out these links:

- [Overtime Final Rule and the Non-Profit Sector](#)
- [Guidance for Non-Profit Organizations on Paying Overtime under the FLSA](#)

(article taken from GuideOne Insurance – Safety Watch newsletter)



PEACEMAKERS ARE AVAILABLE FROM SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 17, 2016

Plan now to host an international peacemaker this fall. These distinguished partners come from around the world to visit out mid-councils between September 23-October 17.

A list of peacemakers will soon be available on the peacemaking website and applications will be accepted until July 31, 2016 or until all spaces are filled.

The Presbyterian Peacemaking Program covers the cost of all international and domestic air travel. Hosting entities provide housing, meals, local transportation and contribute a \$450 fee to the International Peacemakers Program. For complete details and an application to host an International Peacemaker, visit <http://pcusa.org/peacemaking>



Upcoming Speakers at the 2016 Meetings at Lehigh Presbytery

As Lehigh Presbytery looks at creating an atmosphere for cultivating leadership skills among Pastors, Elders, and Congregational Leaders we are pleased to present these educational opportunities. Plan now to join us. (All are welcome to attend.)

Sept. 27, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

Stated Meeting of Lehigh Presbytery at the College Hill Presbyterian Church, 501 Brodhead Street, Easton, PA.

Rev. Ruth Faith Santana-Grace, Executive Presbyter of Philadelphia Presbytery will speak on *“Engaging in the Wilderness of Mid-Council Wanderings –the challenges, temptations, and opportunities of the journey and a new land.”*

Nov. 15, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

Stated Meeting of Lehigh Presbytery at the Community Presbyterian Church, 1755 S. Delaware Drive, Mt. Bethel, PA.

Worship Celebration and Speaker for Princeton Theological Seminary.
