

218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)
June 21-28, 2008 in San Jose, California

On Thursday or Friday, June 19th or 20th, the following commissioners elected by the Presbytery of Elizabeth will begin their journey to General Assembly (GA). Please keep them in your prayers as they seek God's wisdom and vision for our Church. They will be spending 8 very intense and long days in the service of our Lord.

Rev. Brooks Smith, honorably retired pastor of Watchung Ave. Presbyterian Church, North Plainfield
[17] Youth, Commissioner

Rev. Jill Hedlund Kitsko, designated pastor of the Oak Tree Presbyterian Church, Edison
[16] Worship and Spiritual Renewal, Commissioner

Elder Susan C. Gieser, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Berkeley Heights
[14] Review of GA Permanent Committees, Moderator – Commissioner

Elder Alicia Toke, First Presbyterian Church, Carteret
[15] Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Foundation and Presbyterian Publishing, Commissioner

Youth Advisory Delegate (YAD) – **Michelle Cooper**, Siloam-Hope Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth

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Below is some information and web sites where you can browse more information about the schedule and business of the General Assembly. You are urged to learn about GA and the business before it.

General Assembly web site: <http://www.pcusa.org/ga218/>

Key points in the week's schedule:

- Election of the moderator, Saturday evening, June 21st
- Election of the Stated Clerk, Friday morning, June 27th
- Committee meetings start Sunday evening, June 22nd
- Plenary meetings start to review and vote on the business reported out of the committees starts Wed. afternoon, June 25th
- GA concludes noon, June 28th

Praying our way to San Jose



"The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live."
(1 Timothy 2:1-3)

What is "Praying Our Way to San Jose?" It's a road trip — and a whole lot more. The Office of Christian Formation invites the church to a special emphasis on prayer in the days leading up to the General Assembly.

Get involved

Join us as we pray our way to San Jose! The Office of Christian Formation has prepared a special Call to Worship, Opening Prayer, suggested songs and Scripture readings, and a Sending statement for churches wishing to surround the upcoming General Assembly with their prayers. A set of Prayers of the People is also provided for each day of the week leading up to the Assembly. [Get this worship resource.](#)

Also [download this eucharistic liturgy](#) . Featuring the images of cloth and weaving, this liturgy represents a prayer for the unity of our denomination — the fabric of our common life. As we pray our way to San Jose, may the Spirit "knit our hearts together into one living body of Christ."

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Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ

Plans are well underway for the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to be held June 21-28, 2008, in San Jose, California.

The General Assembly is the highest governing body of the church and is representative of the unity of our congregations, sessions, presbyteries, and synods.

The 2008 theme is "Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Many important issues will be considered by commissioners and advisory delegates as they seek to discern and to represent the will of Christ for the PC(USA).

Through worship, fellowship, and decision-making, it is my hope that the 218th General Assembly will strengthen the ministry and mission of this great denomination, in the name of Jesus Christ.

I hope to see you there!

Clifton Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the Office of the General Assembly

A special message from moderator Joan Gray

Hi friends,

The 218th General Assembly (June 21-28, 2008) is just weeks away. **If you haven't already, start praying now!** I would encourage every pastor or session to organize a prayer group or galvanize the groups you already have in your church to pray for our denomination. Sadly I have found that it is far, far more common for people to complain about what they don't like in the PC(USA) than to pray for it. This should not be so.

I plead with you to organize the people in your congregation who care about the larger church to begin now to bathe the 2008th General Assembly in prayer. Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- pray for all the commissioners and for the youth and other advisory delegates who are being elected in presbyteries all over the country now. Pray for wisdom and good judgment in the selection process for these important people.
- pray for wisdom and good judgment as presbyteries consider and vote on overtures to the Assembly.
- pray for the Committee on Local Arrangement in San Jose, California, as they prepare to receive and offer hospitality to thousands of people.
- pray for those persons who are considering standing as candidates for Moderator of the 2008th General Assembly; also for those considering standing as candidates for Stated Clerk of the General Assembly and for the search committee which will present a nominee to the Assembly (Steve Grace is chair of that committee).

Please begin now to rattle the gates of heaven with our desire for God's perfect will to be done at the 218th Assembly and throughout this little Presbyterian piece of the worldwide body of Christ where God has placed us.

Grace and peace,
Joan Gray

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Top Ten List of Issues before the 218th General Assembly (2008)

Before each General Assembly, the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly shares what he considers to be the top ten issues coming to the assembly, based primarily on overtures that have been submitted and his travels and conversations with Presbyterians across the church. Here is the Clerk's non-prioritized list for 2008.

A revised Form of Government

The Form of Government Task Force was created by the 217th General Assembly (2006) to propose a revised polity that would be more flexible, foundational and appropriate for a missional Reformed church in the 21st century. The task force is bringing a revised Form of Government for adoption by the assembly and recommendation to the Presbyteries

Partnership in World Mission

The 217th General Assembly called for a consultation between the General Assembly Council World Mission program and a variety of mission initiators in the PC(USA). The fruits of that consultation will be before this assembly in a call for an "Expanding Partnership in God's Mission" that involves a wide variety of groups working together for the renewal of PC(USA) World Mission.

PC(USA) ecumenical stance and covenants

The 218th General Assembly will take action on a number of ecumenical items, including a proposed new policy on the ecumenical stance of the PC(USA) and covenant agreements with four different churches: the Korean Presbyterian Church in America, the Episcopal Church, the Catholic Church and the Moravian Church.

Peace, unity and purity of the PC(USA)

Several proposals concerning the peace, unity and purity of the church will be before this year's assembly, including fresh ways to use discernment in our life together, reconsideration of some or all of the actions of the previous assembly in this area and proposals to change the constitutional standards for ordination.

The Belhar Confession

This assembly will be asked to act on a proposal to take the first step toward adding the Belhar Confession to *The Book of Confessions*. This confession grows out of the experience of Christians in South Africa and is an affirmation of the biblical call to Christian unity and racial reconciliation.

Middle East concerns

Before this General Assembly will be a variety of overtures and advocacy committee proposals to strengthen the PC(USA)'s witness to peace with justice in relation to both Israel/Palestine and Iraq.

Elections

A Moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008) will be elected to a two-year term, and a new Stated Clerk of the General Assembly will be elected to a four-year term.

Growing God's Church Deep and Wide

The General Assembly Council is challenging the whole church to adopt a two-year commitment to grow the church in membership, in discipleship and in diversity.

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Domestic social justice concerns

This assembly will address a large number of social justice concerns, including the adoption of a new Social Creed, as well as the adoption of major policy papers on serious mental illness, energy and global warming, pay equity for women, homelessness and electoral reform.

A church for future generations

One assembly committee will do generative thinking as it focuses on the church's ministry to and with youth to ensure a church for future generations.

Candidates for Moderator of GA

The following individuals have been endorsed by their presbyteries as a candidate for Moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008):

- [The Rev. Bill Teng](#), endorsed Nov. 27, 2007, by National Capital Presbytery
- [The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow](#), endorsed Jan. 15, 2008, by San Francisco Presbytery
- [The Rev. Carl Mazza](#), endorsed Jan. 18, 2008, by New Castle Presbytery
- [Elder Roger Shoemaker](#), endorsed Feb. 16, 2008, by Homestead Presbytery

For more information browse this site, <http://www.pcusa.org/ga218/moderator.htm> .

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PC-biz is the internet system that will give you access to all the business before GA. It will be updated with committee recommendations, amendments approved by Plenary, and final disposition. The link, Login to PC-biz, to this information may be found on the GA web site home page. In addition to the business, under the Committee tab, there are many resources available under the Resources tab. You are urged to take some time to browse this site.

Prayer for a meeting of the General Assembly



Almighty God,
in Jesus Christ you called disciples
and, by the Holy Spirit, made them one church to serve you.
Be with members of our General Assembly.
Help them to welcome new things you are doing in the world,
and to respect old things you keep and use.
Save them from empty slogans or senseless controversy.
In their deciding, determine what is good for us and for all people.
As this General Assembly meets,
let your Spirit rule,
so that our church may be joined in love and service to Jesus Christ,
who, having gone before us, is coming to meet us in the promise of your kingdom.
Amen.

— from the *Book of Common Worship*