

Most of the committees finished their work by dinner time. A few were done even earlier in the afternoon, either because they had a light docket or because they had a taskmaster as a moderator. Committee 5 - Mid Councils went to about 7:00 PM. Committee 4 – The Way Forward was still going strong when I left for dinner. Hopefully, for their sake, they will finish everything up some time tonight. I can't remember any committee that had to meet on Wednesday morning at past GA's. They may set a record. Our own Barbara Accord is a member of that committee.

A couple of observations: our system, though flawed, basically works. I have been impressed by the commissioners. They meet in large rooms at convention centers, seated at tables shaped like a horseshoe, surrounded by observers who are listening to everything they say. It's like living in a fishbowl.

Plus, they have a large amount of work to deal with. This year the members of Committee 4 came in a day early, but most of the other committees have to complete their work within 48 hours. Some of them will have studied the material ahead of time. Some will have intended to study the material ahead of time. There will be a few, but only a few, who will just wing it.

For the most part though the commissioners just jump right in and get it done. They figure out parliamentary procedure. They digest complex material quickly. They read the material with some nuance and try to strengthen the recommendations being considered. They listen well. They care for one another and they care for this denomination. There may be an occasional outlier but for the most part we are blessed with hard working, highly intelligent commissioners and with committee moderators, vice-moderators, and parliamentarians who work hard to make sure each committee functions efficiently and who do their best to see that each commissioner is treated fairly. Overall, it is impressive.

For the record there are supposed to be 594 commissioners, 141 Young Adult Advisory delegates, 20 Theological School Advisory delegates, 8 Missionary Advisory delegates, 14 Ecumenical Advisory delegates, 115 Corresponding members, 118 General Assembly staff and volunteer assembly assistants, 320 staff, elected members, consultants and guests, 63 staff from theological institutions, 270 staff and stated clerks of presbyteries and synods, 32 ecumenical representatives, and 615 registered observers here in Portland for the 222nd General Assembly.

The day started with the 2nd of two bible studies. This morning we looked at Acts 15:35-41. The passage relates how Paul and Barnabas disagree about whether John Mark should accompany them on their next missionary journey. The two former friends aren't able to reach an agreement so they split up with each of them going their own way. You could say that God was able to take this disagreement and use it to help spread the gospel as they were able to reach twice as many people as they would have if they had stayed together. We then discussed some of the church fights we had experienced and we were asked to reflect on what positive things had come about because of them as well as what lingering effects these fights had had upon the church. There was far more interaction today than there was yesterday probably because the material was now available on PC-Biz (<https://www.pc-biz.org/#/search>)

My day actually started earlier with the Evangelism Breakfast. One thing they talked about was the 25th anniversary of "Turn to the Living God: A Call to Evangelism in Jesus Christ's Way" which was a resolution adopted by the 203rd General Assembly in 1991 for study and implementation. You can find that online at <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/Turn-to-the-Living-God-25th-Anniversary-Edition.pdf>. It still looks good and I plan to read it once I get back in the office. Otherwise the program was underwhelming.

I spent most of the morning sitting in with Committee 14 - Theological Issues and Institutions. Apparently they worked until 10:00 PM last night when they were forced out of the convention center. They were reviewing the Revised Directory for Worship and then worked on amending it but they didn't make much progress. After a night's rest things flowed much more smoothly. You can find the Revised

Directory of Worship and the committee's suggested amendments on PC-Biz at <https://www.pc-biz.org/#/committee/579/business>. Like the New Form of Government, the Revised Directory of Worship is a much shorter document, about 2/3rds the size of the current one. I had read an earlier draft last fall and found it very helpful. If this gets approved by the Assembly – and it should – maybe we can have some kind of workshop or educational event to introduce it to the presbytery.

In the afternoon I spent most of my time with Committee 4 – The Way Forward. Although they had made a lot of progress since the last time I looked in on them, it felt like they still had a long way to go. Things seemed to be moving toward two options: one would be to take some bold steps to reshape the way our national offices are organized and the second would be to appoint a committee to bring some recommendations to the 2018 General Assembly about how our national offices are organized. It's not apparent to me which way they'll vote. I suspect we'll see a minority report out of this committee too.

This is the first time that the General Assembly hasn't printed hard copies of their daily news reports. Instead the reports are made available on-line at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/ga/222nd-general-assembly-2016/ganews/>. While I made it a habit to pick up and read the daily news reports at past GA meetings, I haven't been reading the on-line reports this year. That's my fault and probably the reason I feel so out of touch about what's going on in all the other committees. Part of the reason for not printing hard copies of the news reports this time is the cost. We're saving money by putting the reports on line. The Convention Center apparently also has pretty strict rules about waste and imposes some stiff fines if you generate more than a minimal amount of garbage. I see their reasoning and I agree with it. Nevertheless I'm not really sure what to expect when we go back into plenary tomorrow afternoon and begin to hear the committee reports.

The last link above takes you to the webpage of the 222nd General Assembly. On the left hand side of the page is a link to live stream the plenary sessions of the meeting which start at 2:00 PM PDT which is 5:00 PM EDT. If you want to you can watch the GA meeting while you cook, eat dinner, or clean up.

Tomorrow evening I get to be a floor parliamentarian again at microphone # 5. Sunday afternoon was easy, almost boring, as no one came to the microphone the entire session. I don't think I'll be that lucky again.

A final note: 14 of us gathered at the Davis Street Tavern for a PWV dinner tonight. It's at one of the stops of the green line train and it's not too far from Powell's, an immense bookstore which is loads of fun. We had good food and a good time. This may be the last time we get to relax until we get home.