

A Presbyterian General Assembly meeting often feels like a family reunion. Within the first hour after I registered I had already seen friends from seminary, both commissioners from the Presbytery of Northern Kansas, at least twenty other presbytery executives, our Stated Clerk Maureen Wright as well as Tina Vial from Elkins and John and Margaret Bolt from Morgantown. It is fun to be with so many other Presbyterians.

Even riding in on the train from the airport was a blast. I sat across from a friend who's now serving in New Jersey and the commissioners from her presbytery. A Christian educator from Florida who's here to take a class on polity as part of the requirement for certification joined us. She had just come from the Montreat Youth Conference. A woman who was in Portland to visit her daughter innocently sat down with our group. She asked why we are all here since we all seemed to know each other. A brief explanation of what a General Assembly was turned into a short course on Presbyterian polity. Her follow up questions gave us the opportunity to be evangelists.

My wife and I have actually been here since Monday on vacation and I was on the train back to the convention center after dropping her off at the airport because she's flying home tonight. Although it's rained some every day that we've been here and the high temperatures may not have gotten out of the 60's, this is one of the best vacations we've ever had. Probably my favorite part of the trip was driving along Historic Route 30, east of Portland. The area has the highest concentration of water falls in the country. It was impressive.

Tomorrow starts off with "Riverside Conversations" which are informal presentations on some of the major issues that are coming to this General Assembly. Then at 11:00 AM local time, the General Assembly officially begins with worship. The outgoing moderator, Heath Rada will be the preacher. I expect Heath will review what he has been hearing as he has traveled around the country and around the world and I expect him to offer some ideas on what our denomination might be doing differently as we live into this new century. The worship service will be live streamed on the webpage for the General Assembly on the PC (U.S.A.) website: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/ga/222nd-general-assembly-2016/> I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to join with the thousands of Presbyterians here and thousands more who will participate electronically for what is almost always one of the highlights of the entire week. (Remember 10:00 AM Portland time is 2:00 PM in West Virginia.)

Following worship the Assembly will break for lunch. The first business session will be mostly an orientation for commissioners, explaining voting procedures among other things. Then in the evening the Assembly will elect a moderator or actually co-moderators. There are actually two sets of co-moderator candidates. Denise Anderson, pastor of Unity Presbyterian Church in Temple Hills, Maryland is running with Jan Edmiston, who is the associate executive presbyter for ministry in the Presbytery of Chicago and David Parker, a ruling elder from Salem Presbytery, is running with Adan Mairena, a native of Honduras who is now serves as pastor of the West Kensington Ministry at Norris Square and the Yeadon Presbyterian Church. Prior to this we have only elected moderators and vice moderators. This year the candidates all decided it made more sense in light of the time and travel commitments that being moderator requires to run as a teams of co-moderators. This actually makes a great deal of sense. Being moderator shouldn't be a grueling experience. Having co-moderators actually seems more doable. It seems surprising someone hasn't tried this before. It's definitely worth a try.