



Monday began with a worship service led by the Co-Moderators of the 225th General Assembly (GA), Ruth Santana-Grace and Shavon Sterling-Louis. The Co-Moderators preached on Luke 4: 16-20, weaving in the theme of the 225th GA, Anointed and Unbound: We Thrive. All who were present were invited to communion followed by an anointing. The service concluded with a benediction that included the Co-Moderators of both the 225th and 226th assemblies, marking the passing of the leadership to Co-Moderators CeCe Armstrong and Tony Larson.

The election of the Stated Clerk was the core of the morning's plenary. The Stated Clerk Nomination Committee introduced candidate the Rev. Jihyun Oh. In her opening statement, she shared her hopes and vision for the denomination. "I love this church, the part of the body of Christ that is the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)," Oh told the assembly. "I love this church for who we have been, warts and all, and for who we are now, and who we will become as we faithfully discern God's call for us." (Mike Ferguson, General Assembly News, July 1, 2024.) When asked what set Rev. Oh apart from other applicants, members of the nomination committee stated her vision to work on the resilience of the Office of the General Assembly and Presbyterian Mission Agency staff, her work in both the world of science and as a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the PC (U.S.A.), the depth and breadth of her experience in the life of the church at all levels, and her humility and desire to seek answers through prayer. Rev. Oh was elected by a vote of 420-2. She was surrounded by her family as she was installed. She was presented with a communion set that will be used this week at the assembly. Rev. Oh will begin her work as Stated Clerk on August 1, 2024.

The Christian Formation Committee presented its last item of business in its report. This Commissioner Resolution (CR 07) focused on an effort to strongly encourage seminaries to be more transparent regarding their investments. Many noted their agreement with the idea but did not feel that this resolution was the way to address the issue. The assembly followed the committee's recommendation to disapprove.

The Committee on Ordination presented its report. The Presbytery of West Virginia had concurred with three overtures from Lake Erie Presbytery to insert into the Book of Order language on shared ministry to specify practices already being done around churches sharing pastoral leadership. The first overture was answered with an authoritative interpretation (AI). The remaining two overtures were answered with the first, meaning that the initial response addresses them all. The AI appears below.

At the present time, there is no consistent, common, and accepted definition of the term "shared ministry" in use in the PC(USA) that could be applied consistently in determining pastoral calls. Further, the types of installed pastoral relationships are specified in G-2.0504a as pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. The term "shared ministry" points to a mode or context in which these types of installed pastoral relationships may be practiced, and this term should not be confused with the types of installed ministry.

The Constitution presents a clear and consistent understanding of the distinct nature of pastoral call to and relationship with each congregation. In accord with G-1.0504b, which limits matters to be transacted by congregations at duly-called congregational meetings, each congregation seeking a called pastoral relationship votes to recommend to the presbytery the call to a pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor to provide pastoral service, "review[s] the adequacy of and approve[s] changes to the terms of call of the pastor or pastors," and "request[s], consent[s] to, or decline[s] to consent to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.'

Because of the distinct nature of the pastoral relationship established by this process and the authority of each congregation to participate in calling its own pastors, one congregation does not have authority to vote on a call of the pastor of another congregation. For this reason, the presbytery considers, creates, and dissolves pastoral calls to individual churches.

When an individual pastoral call is defined as less than full-time by the presbytery, it is permissible for a minister of Word and Sacrament to serve in multiple calls. In the circumstances in which a pastor or co-pastors serve multiple congregations, as the presbytery receives for its action the recommendation resulting from each congregation's vote on the pastoral call to that congregation, there is no restrictive language present in G-2.0804 that precludes a presbytery from specifically considering the terms of call for multiple validated calls for individual pastor or pastors in the aggregate for the purpose of meeting a presbytery's minimum terms of call requirements.

Because of the distinct nature of the pastoral relationship and the authority of each congregation to participate in calling its own pastors, each presbytery must install its own pastor or pastors to the particular call. Should a presbytery choose to do so, in the cases in which a pastor or pastors serve multiple congregations, it may conduct multiple installation services to each of these calls concurrently.

The Committee on Ordination recommended the addition of several members to the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination and to extend the work of the committee until the 227th General Assembly. This was approved. In addition, the assembly referred two items of business to the task force: review of the process for preparation for ministry and the use of commissioned pastors.

I am excited to hear the focus on lay leadership and Commissioned Pastors as this reflects pastoral leadership in the Presbytery of West Virginia!

The Committee on Ecumenical and Interfaith Partnerships presented its report. The report highlighted an item approved on the consent agenda that would establish an Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on Local Sharing of Ministries. This agreement will be sent to the Presbyteries for approval.

The Finance Resources Committee presented its report. In a significant step toward unifying the Office of the General Assembly, the Presbyterian Mission Agency, and the Administrative Services Group, a unified budget was presented for 2025-2026. The narrative budget clearly reflected the goals and values of the PC (U.S.A.). The committee also recommended approval of a streamlined special offering plan developed by the Special Offerings Task Force. Following a long debate, the recommendation passed establishing the Christmas Joy Offering, the One Great Hour of Sharing, and a World Communion Offering.

The final report of the day was from the Race, Sexuality, and Gender Justice Committee. The assembly followed the committee's recommendation to recognize March 31 as Transgender Day of Visibility in all future printings and distribution of the planning calendar. The assembly also approved a resolution addressing diversity, equity, inclusion and the realities of Hispanic Latino-a-e ministry.

If you would like to follow Tuesday's plenary sessions, a full schedule of events may be found here. The General Assembly can be livestreamed at <https://ga-pcusa.org/>. Interested persons can still register free as an online observer, which allows access to MyGA. A MyGA account provides online observers with access to many of the same resources available to commissioners and other official participants. I strongly encourage you to sign up for a Daily News GA Update.

Another opportunity for General Assembly news is The Presbyterian Outlook, a longtime, independent source of news and information. There may be a cost to view some articles. Presbytery of West Virginia's own John Bolt (ruling elder at First Presbyterian Church, Morgantown) is here in Salt Lake City serving as a journalist for The Presbyterian Outlook.

