

## GA Report – RE Craig Gibson

The Presbyterian Church USA gathered for the 223<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly in historic downtown St. Louis, Missouri. The people that hosted this gathering were the warmest and welcoming group I have ever been a part. From June 15<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> my time as a commissioner from Heartland was filled with commissioner training, assembly and worship, committee training and meeting, and morning bible study.

One of my favorite activities was the Sunday morning worship. The area churches of St. Louis opened their doors to the assembly visitors. Each participant could choose a congregation to worship with. I chose the two small congregations of Affton and Behlville. These two congregations have created a joint congregation of two community churches. They worship together for a few months in Affton and then a few months in Behlville. Each church has retained their part time pastor, and each church, for now, are maintaining their own building and grounds. This was a very warm and cordial group. The two pastors shared the service on this Sunday. A potluck chicken dinner followed the service and everyone went back to the convention very full and sleepy.

Other Commissioners that I spoke with were also very pleased with their worship experiences. Some, like me, traveled to smaller churches, and some attended very large churches with multi services. Each visitor reported that the St. Louis hosts were great.

The number of participants at the Assembly were as follows;

594 commissioners 50% Teaching Elders and 50% Ruling Elders, the commissioners were the voice and vote in both Committee and assembly business sessions;

171 Young Adult Advisory Delegates (YAADS) between 17 – 23 yrs. old;

Theological Advisory Delegates representing 25 Theological Institutions;

Corresponding Members, former GA moderators, former stated clerks & associate Clerks of GA,

Members from Advisory Delegates, Constitutional advisory delegates, former Synod Executives, Presidents of each Theological Institution;

Others included in the Assembly were; Presbytery executives, Stated Clerks, Synod Stated Clerks, Resource Persons, and a variety of staff and volunteers.

The breakdown of committees serving this Assembly were as follows;

General Assembly Procedures

The Way Forward

Mid Councils

Church Polity and Ordered Ministry

Environmental Issues

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Peacemaking, Immigration, & International

Mission Coordination

Social Justice Issues

BOP, PILP, PPC and Foundation

Theological Issues and Institutions

The committee I served was Environmental Issues. This committee considered matters related to fossil fuels, food sovereignty, and the environment. I was most impressed with the leadership of both the moderator and vice moderator of this committee. There were many lively and impassioned presentations on behalf of divesting from the fossil fuel industry of Presbyterian investments.

The overall impression given to me as a ruling elder of this faith was the careful attention and courtesy given to every single person attending. The acceptance of all people and the love for mankind was profound. I believe without a doubt our church is committed to Social Witness. And, the people serving in our churches are making their commitments to connect to God and make a difference in their communities to the highest accountability.