

Beaver Butler Presbytery
226th General Assembly (2024)
Kerry Michelle Dowdy – Ruling Elder



This was my first PC(USA) General Assembly, and I did not know what to expect. The theme for the 226th General Assembly is “Live into Hope”. Our committee work was done online via Zoom which I’m accustomed to with classes at



PTS (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary). However, the plenary portion was in person. The flights were fine and when I landed at Salt Lake City and walked toward the exit there was a group of folks wearing bright blue vests and smiling faces. These volunteers from Utah Presbytery were amazing - in fact they rocked! They took us to a bus that shuttled us to each of the hotels. All throughout the assembly hall, these friendly folks were ever present helping us find our seats or anything else.

The first evening there, we were welcomed with a reception and a Japanese drum performance. I was able to meet a few people, eat some fancy food, and enjoy the drum music. Those that know me, know that I’m an introvert and outside my comfort zone! It speaking and there were so group lunches and group tables. One lunch gathering (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary) folks Presbytery gathered for a Iguana. Of all the group most enjoyable as I’m much person. I will confess, I set out for a lunch and dinner on my own to not only connect with God through creation but to spend some quiet time recharging from all the peopleness.



this gathering was definitely hard to hear others many people. There were also dinners around large round was with PTS (Pittsburgh and one evening Beaver Butler Mexican feast at The Blue meals, these two were the more of a small crowd type of



I stayed at the Hilton which had a breakfast buffet and restaurant. Sunday morning, the hostess greeted me and asked 'table for two' as there was a reasonably friendly looking commissioner behind me. I looked at her, she looked at me and we both said sure. Her name is Dorothy. While we were ordering and chatting another commissioner was seated at the table next to us and we all joined in conversation. Her name is Kay. We slid the table over breakfast together. During the remainder of the assembly, we would find ourselves all seated together for breakfast. Our waitress's name was Mavric and each morning she remembered that I was there. I must say one of my favorite parts of the General Assembly was the breakfast each morning, know one another and the assembly happenings



the assembly, we would find ourselves all seated together for breakfast. Our waitress's name was Mavric and each morning she remembered that I was there. I must say one of my favorite parts of the General Assembly was the breakfast each morning, know one another and the assembly happenings was quite valuable to have this time and space over breakfast to be able to discuss together some of the overtures that we voted on. On the day when we all departed, we got a group picture, exchanged phone numbers and deemed ourselves the breakfast buddies. We strive to keep in touch.

I went to church service at First Presbyterian of Salt Lake City. We were welcomed during service and the sermon was a continuation of the Fruit of the Spirit series focusing on Love. It was delightful to see the children's choir sing and participate in worship. There was a fellowship lunch afterwards and a demonstration of the Guns to Garden program. I was able to talk to a couple folks involved with this and they spoke about how they receive guns which are donated. They told stories of parents who turned the gun in that their child used for harm, and they wanted to get rid of it. In the courtyard of the church, there were blacksmiths heating up the metal from the gun and transforming it into gardening tools. This program really struck me how something used for evil is transformed into something used for good. I thought about how Jesus transforms people like Saul to Paul.



My first observation upon walking into the Plenary Hall was ‘wow’. It was a lot to take in with rows upon rows of tables and chairs. But once I was settled in, Rev. A David Paul Kemp to my right, we were amongst ourselves to floor for consideration. There were times of silliness with our duck mascot and a plethora of mini Jesus figures. We had times of laughter, confusion, sadness, clarity, joy. Oh, and we had snacks—we had lots of snacks! The co-moderators Rev. CeCe and Rev. Tony kept the plenaries fair and reflected on the Equity Primes to ensure all voices were heard. They also knew when to break the tension in the room with pauses for prayer, dancing to the Electric Slide, or just some lighthearted humor.

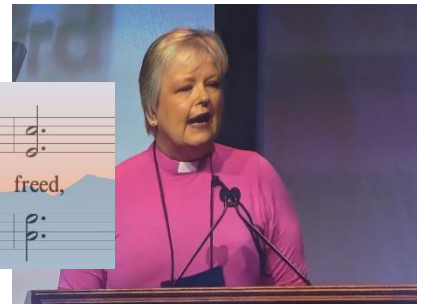
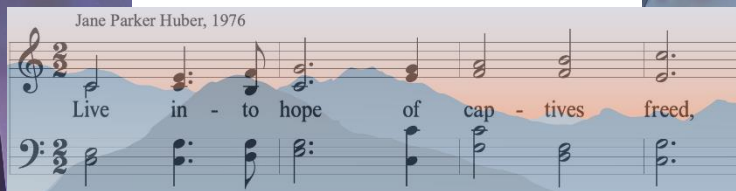
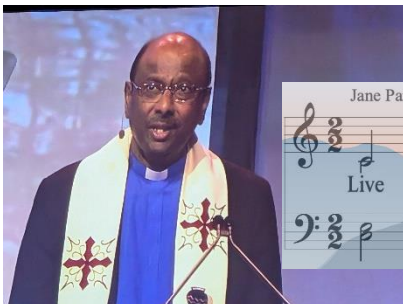


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Each morning we began with a worship service. Not only were these devotional times filled with music and hymns, but they were spiritually fulfilling. The sermons set the tone of the Assembly to welcome the Holy Spirit among us and to Live into Hope. The Ecumenical Service was most impactful to me. The message of the kite that did not want to be attached to the string by Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay (pictured left) from the World Council of Churches was meaningful and practical. The Rev. Fiona Smith (pictured right) from the Church of Scotland spoke of differences in meanings of vocabulary we use and how important a glossary is. Rev. Shavon Starling-Lewis spoke about

‘sankofa’ which means to go back and get what is forgotten or retrieve.

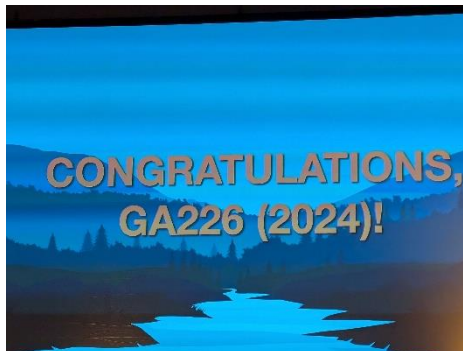




There were rooms set up around the Plenary Hall for various groups. Two rooms that stood out to me were the quiet room and the LGBTQIA+ space. Rev. David and I walked into the LGBTQIA+ room and were immediately welcomed by Em and Milo, both were YAADs. We shared stories and got to hear Milo's stand-up comedy routine about Presbyterians – it was spot on! Speaking of YAADs, these young adults were brilliant, well-prepared, well-spoken, and advised well. In my opinion, they should be given voice and vote. After listening to several YAADs, including Beaver Butler Presbytery's YAAD, Kemp, I am much more optimistic about the future of the Presbyterian USA denomination/church.



So, would I attend again – yes! It was a great experience and I learned quite a bit. It was astounding to see just how vast and diverse Presbyterian (USA) is. To be part of the process that voted and determined the future course of PC(USA) was exciting and an honor. May we Live into Hope!



There were maps where those in attendance could place a pin denoting their country/place of origin.

