

Significant Actions of the General Assembly

• Morton H. Smith Twenty-Eighth General Assembly Moderator

The General Assembly met June 20-23 in Tampa, Florida. TE Dr. Morton H. Smith was elected as moderator. Dr. Smith is one of the founding fathers of the PCA and served as its first Stated Clerk 1973-1988. Dr. Smith has served as a professor at Belhaven College, Reformed Theological Seminary, and Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and has written a number of books. Dr. Smith urged the Assembly to maintain the unity of the Church. The tradition in the PCA is, in alternate years, to honor a Ruling Elder and then a Teaching Elder by electing him as moderator.

• Creation Study Committee Report

The CSC reported after two years of study. The committee was composed of advocates of four major views on the issue of the length of the days of the Creation Week described in Genesis 1:1-2:3. The report was docketed as a special order of business on Wednesday with several hours of the Assembly's time allotted to the report. The PCA has been and remains committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, *ex nihilo* creation of the universe by divine *fiat*, the historicity of the Genesis account of creation, affirming that Adam and Eve were directly created by God, and that they are the progenitors of the human race. Evolution-versus-Creation was one of the issues that brought about the formation of the PCA in 1973. The length of the creation days, however, was not a major issue among those who founded the PCA in 1973. The committee, formed in 1998, studied the issue of the length of the days of the Creation Week. The committee presented the strengths and weaknesses of four major views held by conservative, Reformed, Evangelicals, namely the 1) Calendar-Day Interpretation, 2) Day-Age interpretation, 3) Framework Interpretation, and 4) Analogical Day Interpretation. The committee recommended that 1) the report be made available to all who wish to study it, 2) that no further action on the report be taken for at least two years, and 3) that the committee be dismissed with thanks. A substitute motion to declare that all views other than the Calendar-Day Interpretation be declared exceptions to the *Westminster Standards* failed. Ninety-five commissioners registered their affirmative votes for the failed motion. The Assembly amended the recommendations so that, 1) the report be made available to all who wish to study it, 2) it be recognized that a diversity of interpretations has existed in the PCA since its founding, and that such divergent views be acceptable as long as the full historicity of the creation account is accepted, and 3) that the committee be dismissed with thanks. One hundred seventy commissioners recorded their negative votes on the approval of the report as amended. The full report is presently available on the PCANews.com website <http://www.PCANews.com> under the "Debates" section, and will be available in printed form in the publication of the *Minutes of the Twenty-Eighth General Assembly*. The minutes will be sent to all registered commissioners and may be purchased from the CE&P Bookstore by those who were not commissioners. The CSC Report is a ninety-three-page document in a Microsoft Word format.

• Stewardship Goals

As the PCA has grown and expanded its ministries through its Assembly Committees and Agencies, its increased level of ministry has required increased expenditures. The Assembly approved a total of \$73,707,524 as the maximum expenditures for its General Assembly Ministries. Contributions to PCA Committees and Agencies are voluntary as churches and individuals support the cooperative ministries of the PCA.

- **Post-Assembly Publications**

The Staff of the Stated Clerk's office has been working diligently since the Assembly to prepare important documents for publication. The *BCO* amendments approved by the Assembly have been sent to the printer. The minutes have been drafted, are being proofread, and will be sent to the printer this month.

- **Participation in the General Assembly**

After registration was finally completed, 709 of the 1,400 PCA churches sent commissioners to the denominations highest church court. Of the 1,367 registered commissioners, 921 were Teaching Elders and 446 were Ruling Elders. Moreover, registered commissioners who actually participated in deliberations on the floor of the Assembly at a given time fluctuated considerably. In the first vote taken shortly after convening (to elect the moderator) 893 commissioners voted. The highest attendance was evident when the Creation Study Committee Report came to the floor, though there were no counted votes at the time to determine the actual attendance. Later, when the important Bills and Overtures Committee Report came to the floor on Thursday, approximately 300 commissioners were on the floor. By Thursday afternoon, some 1,000 commissioners had absented themselves from the Assembly. Quorum requirements (*BCO* 14-5) are 100 commissioners (fifty TE's and fifty RE's) from one-third of the Presbyteries to transact General Assembly business.

- **New Presbyteries**

The Assembly approved dividing Northeast Presbytery into three new Presbyteries but disapproved dividing Westminster Presbytery into two Presbyteries.

- **Strategic Planning**

The Assembly approved the concept of the Committees and Agencies of the Assembly working together on Strategic Planning for a more effective coordinating of ministries. A report will be made to the Thirtieth General Assembly.

- **Reformed University Ministries Elevated**

The Assembly gave preliminary approval to elevating RUM from a sub-committee of MNA to a new Permanent Committee. Changes in the *BCO* will need to be approved by 2/3 of the Presbyteries and by the 2001 General Assembly. RUM will minister on some sixty campuses this fall.

- **Standing Judicial Commission**

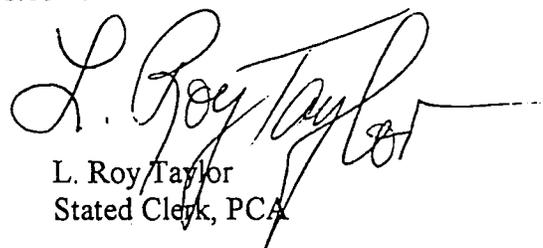
In a first-time event, the General Assembly directed the SJC to take up the case of several Presbyteries requesting the Assembly, through the SJC, to assume original jurisdiction over a minister under *BCO* 34-1. A panel has been assigned to the case and will conduct a preliminary hearing in September under *BCO* 31-2. The full SJC will meet October 19-21.

- **PCA Directory 2001**

We are preparing to publish *The PCA Directory 2001*, the so-called "Blue Book," the smaller directory of PCA churches, General Assembly Ministries, Presbytery Clerks, WIC Presbytery Presidents, and RUM campus ministries. Please submit changes to this office by September 30.

- **PCANews.com**

The General Assembly's electronic newsmagazine was launched at the Assembly. TE Dr. Dominic Aquila was approved by the Theological Examining Committee as PCA News Officer and Editor of PCANews.com. Page views thus far have exceeded expectations. Dr. Aquila will join the AC staff this month, moving from Miami to Atlanta. The first issue that will be debated in PCANews.com will be the Creation Study Committee report. News of the Church is updated six days per week. *A free weekly email newsletter is available for all that wish to subscribe at <http://www/PCANews.com>.*



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