May 2018

Dear Commissioner or Advisory Delegate:

As outlined in the *Manual of the General Assembly*, one of the responsibilities of the Stated Clerk is to provide to commissioners and advisory delegates an electronic packet of information about each candidate who is standing for Moderator. This year we have one set of candidates standing for Moderator/Vice Moderator and two sets of candidates standing for Co-Moderator.

This booklet contains the following information for all candidates standing for Moderator/Vice Moderator or Co-Moderators of the 223rd General Assembly (2018): a photograph, biographical sketch, personal statement regarding the candidate’s sense of call to the office, a written presentation by the presbytery having jurisdiction over the candidate (if that council has endorsed him or her), and the candidate’s responses to a questionnaire developed by the Stated Clerk.

The candidates have chosen the layout for their material within the space limitations provided.

The election of the Moderator/Vice Moderator or Co-Moderators will take place during the plenary session of the General Assembly on Saturday evening, June 16, 2018. The process that will be used can be found in Standing Rule H.1.c.(4).

On Friday evening, June 15, from 5:00–8:00 p.m, and on Saturday morning, June 16, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., space will be provided in the second floor atrium of the America’s Center for Moderator/Vice Moderator or Co-Moderator candidates or their representatives to meet commissioners, advisory delegates, and other interested parties.

God’s blessings to you as you continue to pray and prepare for the General Assembly.

In the name of the Christ we serve,

[Signature]

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Questions for Candidates for
Moderator of the 223rd General Assembly (2018)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Using no more than 500 words for each response, please answer Questions 1 through 3 (required) and two additional questions.

1. The theme of the 223rd General Assembly (2018) is “Kindom Building for the 21st Century,” based upon Matthew 6:33 - “But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” How do we build up the Kindom of God both individually and corporately?

2. The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

3. This assembly is taking place in St. Louis, a city that has seen divisive violence and injustice, while at the same time has been witness to opportunities to demonstrate the church’s unity and be a sign of God’s love and justice. How can the 223rd General Assembly (2018) be a sign of hope to the city and the whole church?

4. How can the church community make room for all people to share their stories of faith? How can we listen to the stories of people who are not in the church?

5. We live in a violent and war-torn world. What might the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its congregations do to strengthen our ministry of peacemaking?

6. In our interactions as Presbyterians with people of other religions and faith traditions, we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do dialogue and witness help Presbyterians support those of other religious traditions who are targeted with hate speech and acts of violence?

7. What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?

8. Describe the church of tomorrow – the church that is emerging. How is it different from the church of today? How is it the same?

9. What is your elevator speech about what it means to be Presbyterian?
In April of 2016, during worship at a Synod regional gathering, I was struck with an amazing sense of hope and confidence that God is at work in our church, our denomination, and in me. This experience is difficult to describe, but it filled me, body and soul. But even more remarkable was “hearing” an imperative that I needed to take this message to our church by standing for election as the Moderator of the PC(USA). In fact, I’ve been waiting for God to let me off the hook since then, but it hasn’t happened.
WHY WE ARE STANDING AS MODERATOR/VICE MODERATOR — BY CHANTAL

I have a message of faith, hope and love that I am compelled to share with our denomination. The call that I have experienced is clear: to stand for Moderator of the 223d General Assembly. It has been my blessing and great fortune to meet Ken Hockenberry, and to be the beneficiary of his ideas, inspiration, rich experience, and gifts of ministry. For Ken, his current work and his own call are best suited to the role of Vice Moderator, a role that he has embraced from the time of our first meeting. We both find much to admire in the long established and successful concept of the Moderator/VICE Moderator leadership model. Thus with thoughtful and deliberate purpose, we go forward now as candidates in these respective roles. We are keenly aware of the synergy that we will need, and the commitment that will be required to fulfill our individual duties as we work together and are led by our Lord to serve the Presbyterian Church (USA).

MEET CHANTAL ATNIP

I was born in Moulins, France, where my father served in the U.S. Air Force. I was named for the patron saint of Moulins, Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, a remarkable, strong woman from the 14th century (check Wikipedia!). A year later we re-settled in Vero Beach, FL. There I grew up and joined First Presbyterian Church at age 12.

I graduated valedictorian of my high school class, and then majored in mathematics and math education at Florida State University. Following college, I married Robert G. Atnip and joined him in Birmingham, AL, where he was in medical school. We joined Independent Presbyterian Church, PC(USA), and had a wonderful time singing in their chancel choir. I worked in IT, designing clinical lab and pharmacy systems.

After med school we moved to Boston, MA, for Robert’s surgical residency. I went to work for IBM as a Systems Engineer. We attended Harvard Memorial Church initially, later joining Old South (UCC) Church. Our first daughter was born, and I “retired” from IBM. I then joined a colleague in starting a computer consulting and medical software development company, which grew to a maximum of 15 employees. Graduating from surgical training, Robert took a job at Penn State Hershey Medical Center as a vascular surgeon, and I moved the marketing and technical writing portion of our company to a “branch office” in Hershey, PA. After our second daughter was born, I “retired” from the company.

While our children were young, I spent my energies taking care of home and family, and working for our church, Pine Street, PC(USA), Harrisburg, PA. I did computer consulting, substitute teaching in local schools, and math tutoring at all levels up through calculus. At Pine Street, I served on the Board of Trustees for 18 years, and was Treasurer of the church for close to 20 years. I taught junior high Sunday School, ran Mom’s program for many years, served on search committees for our last two Ministers of Music, and helped manage a major capital campaign. I continue to sing in the chancel choir, help with children’s music, play in the bell choir, and serve on Session as Clerk of Session and chair of Stewardship.

Since 2005 I have been Treasurer of the Synod of the Trinity PC(USA). This position includes oversight of the finances of our Synod region (Pennsylvania, most of West Virginia, and part of Ohio). I work closely with the Synod leadership in ministry and mission to each of our 16 presbyteries, and have the opportunity to work with the wider church, such as Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Foundation, and Mid Council Financial Network. It has been a blessing and a joy.

For fun, I love to cook, play bridge and computer games, read, travel, and be married to my husband of 42 years. Meanwhile, our older daughter Elizabeth is working on a PhD in Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Our younger daughter Lindsay is just finishing residency as a Family Medicine MD in Boise, ID. We are very proud.

Chantal Atnip Biography – In Brief

Married 42 years to Robert G. Atnip, Vascular Surgeon
Mother of two daughters – Lindsay (working on her PhD at University of Chicago) and Elizabeth (completing her Family Medicine Residency in Boise, Idaho)
Treasurer for over 12 years of the Synod of the Trinity
Pine Street Presbyterian over 30 years, Ruling Elder/Clerk of Session, Trustee/Treasurer for 20 years, chancel choir, bell choir, Middle School Sunday School Teacher, music leader for preschool/elementary children, facilitator of Mom’s group, served in soup kitchen, taught in Adult Learning (GED) program
Born in France (Air Force brat), grew up in Vero Beach, Florida
Graduated from Florida State University with degrees in Mathematics and Secondary Math Education
Working career includes computer programming, computer analyst, IBM Systems Engineer and Manager, Partner in Computer Software/Consulting company, consultant, math substitute teacher and tutor
Loves to read, cook, travel and play all kinds of games
**MEET KEN HOCKENBERRY**

During my early years of service as a presbytery stated clerk, I participated in many General Assemblies as well as various other conferences and meetings. People I had never met before would see my name badge and ask about my unusual last name. They’d say, “Hockenberry – I know a Mary Hockenberry. Any relation to you?” I would smile and proudly respond, “Oh yes – that’s my mom.” For many years she served the national church by planning small church conferences, in addition to her work in our home church, presbytery, and synod. At 80 years old, she is currently serving on the Session of her church.

Service to the triune God through the Presbyterian Church is a multi-generational activity in my family. I saw this path as a young child, and have been following it ever since. The third generation is still following the path as we have a daughter who is currently in her second year of seminary and an older daughter who serves as a ruling elder.

I was born, baptized, confirmed – and years later, ordained as a teaching elder – in the community of Wharton United Presbyterian Church, in Wharton, New Jersey. Sunday school class around tables with wood dividers in fellowship hall, and later in the front pews or the back pew of our small church, along with the worship service which followed, along with youth group - this is where most of my Christian and Presbyterian formation occurred. We even lived in the church manse when the church was between called pastors. On Saturdays my mom would run off the worship bulletin (since the old mimeograph machine was in the church office, which was in the manse) and after supper, my younger sister and I, with our mom would fold the Sunday bulletins.

Our stated supply pastor suggested I check out Grove City College in western PA; I was accepted there, majored in music education, with a concentration in voice, and graduated. Sensing from my youth that God was calling me to be a pastor, and having this call confirmed through my college years through singing and leading worship in various churches as part of a choral group called “New Grace,” I applied and was accepted to Princeton Theological Seminary. There I met Judy Hartung, also studying to be a pastor. We both graduated, and later married, and are blessed to have three children, who now are all young adults: Kathryn, a Louisville Seminary graduate who is working as a family therapist, Jennifer, a current MDiv student at Louisville Seminary, and Andrew, a University of Louisville grad working as an organic farmer.

I served as a pastor for Onondaga Hill Presbyterian Church in Syracuse, New York, for 10 years; a co-pastor with my wife Judy for Beulah Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, for 10 years and then 12 years as pastor when Judy began serving at the Presbyterian Church Center and later as Chaplain with Presbyterian Homes of Louisville and supply pastor of Buechel Presbyterian Church; and now as an interim pastor for Carter-Westminster United Presbyterian Church in Skokie, Illinois, following Judy in her newer call as an associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights, Illinois.

During our years in Louisville I was given the opportunity to serve for 19 years as stated clerk for Mid-Kentucky Presbytery. I also served as an adjunct professor at Louisville Seminary in the areas of homiletics and worship leadership as well as the interim director of the Field Education office at Louisville Semi-
The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

While seeking a running mate, I asked for descriptions of both the Moderator and Vice Moderator role. When I was provided this description of the “job” of Moderator, my initial reaction was “What a wonderful job!” To be given the opportunity to tell our stories to one another and to the world is a joyful task. I look forward to sharing the stories I already know, from growing up in First Presbyterian Church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

I look forward to sharing the stories I already know, from growing up in First Presbyterian Church in Vero Beach, FL, attending Trinity (Pennsylvania, West Virginia and eastern Ohio). There are stories to be told from the 4 General Assemblies I’ve attended – and new stories from the 223rd General Assembly. More importantly, there will be stories learned and shared over the next two years as I represent, as Moderator, our denomination both home and abroad.

To be an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace is a wonderful expression of what it means to be Presbyterian. I firmly embrace the role of Moderator to be the face of our denomination – to express the values and policies we have collectively approved not just at the 223rd General Assembly, but over the years. We have a long history of Social Witness to share with one another and the world.

Lastly, to uphold the people of God through prayer is an honor and privilege – but one that all of us should do each and every day. I am hopeful that my time as Moderator would let me bring back joys, concerns and possibilities to our national church – and to be a part of the future of our denomination.

This assembly is taking place in St. Louis, a city that has seen divisive violence and injustice, while at the same time has been witness to opportunities to demonstrate the church’s unity and be a sign of God’s love and justice. How can the 223rd General Assembly (2018) be a sign of hope to the city and the whole church?

We have all seen the opportunities the Hands and Feet initiative, begun by Stated Clerk, J. Herbert Nelson, II, offered last year – as a part of the Big Tent, and is offering in conjunction with our 223rd General Assembly.

In researching information on St. Louis for this question, I was reminded of the social unrest there associated with racial tensions over the recent past: 2014 (Ferguson) and 2017 (St. Louis). 24/7 Wall St. identifies St. Louis as the 2nd most violent city in the U.S and we will be visiting 4th ranked Baltimore in two years at our 224th General Assembly.

So how can we be a sign of hope to the city, the whole church and beyond? I am reminded of an admonition from John:

1 John 3:17 New International Version (NIV)
17 If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?

We need to respond materially! We have opportunities through our offering to help address the injustices in the court/fee system, that has been described as a modern form of debtor's prison. But to me, as important, is to be visible! We need to let the world know not only do we care, but that we also take action. It's easy to find “bad” news on the TV, online, on social media. How can we get the “Good News” out – not just good news about mission and ministry we are actively involved in, but the Good News of Jesus. How do we let a disillusioned world understand that we love our neighbor in response to God's love for us?
In our interactions as Presbyterians with people of other religions and faith traditions, we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do dialogue and witness help Presbyterians support those of other religious traditions who are targeted with hate speech and acts of violence?

Back in 1997 and with the approval of the 209th General Assembly, our Worldwide Ministries Division produced a helpful document and commended it to our congregations: "Respectful Presence: An Understanding of Interfaith Prayer and Celebration from a Reformed Christian Perspective."

As the title suggests, as Christian and as Presbyterians we are encouraged to express and maintain deep respect for those persons and their faith while maintaining loyalty to the Christian gospel.

"Elevator pitch is a slang term used to describe a brief speech that outlines an idea for a product, service or project. The name comes from the notion that the speech should be delivered in the short time period of an elevator ride, usually 20-60 seconds. Elevator Pitch - Investopedia

Chantal – To be Presbyterian, to me, is to be connectional. At age 12, when I went through confirmation class, I was truly impressed by how our denomination is structured – the representative nature, the equality (or parity) of our ministers and ruling elders, and the belief that the Holy Spirit is active in our work! At age 12, I was proud of the fact that the United States form of government is patterned after Presbyterian form of government – and I am still proud of that fact. As a Commissioner to the 223rd General Assembly, I trust the Holy Spirit will be active in our time together and in the decisions that are collectively made. The other aspect of being Presbyterian and connectional is a realization that our ministry is bigger than what we can do individually or even as a congregation. We are a community of faith, hope and love in the wider world – and are better able to server Jesus together as Presbyterians!

What is your elevator speech about what it means to be Presbyterian?

WITH God’s grace and love is freely given to us, rather than something we have to earn. Because we are immersed in this free gift of grace, we are empowered to engage in acts of gratitude, giving thanks to God through worship, as well as ministry and missional service to others.

To be Presbyterian also means that I am part of a church community where elders are called to rule and to teach. That’s what the word “Presbyterian” means: “governed by elders.” God – through the Holy Spirit – calls ordinary people to general missional service in the church and in the world, following in the way of Jesus Christ. God also calls some ordinary people to particular kinds of missional service, into what we call the ordered ministries of Deacons, Ruling Elders, and Teaching Elders or Ministers. This means our church community operates with a high degree of shared leadership, found and called from the bottom – up, rather than from the top – down.

Ken — What it means to be Presbyterian.

To be Presbyterian means I am part of a church community immersed and empowered by grace and gratitude. We believe God’s grace and love is freely given to us, rather than something we have to earn. Because we are immersed in this free gift of grace, we are empowered to engage in acts of gratitude, giving thanks to God through worship, as well as ministry and missional service to others.

To be Presbyterian also means that I am part of a church community where elders are called to rule and to teach. That’s what the word “Presbyterian” means: “governed by elders.” God – through the Holy Spirit – calls ordinary people to general missional service in the church and in the world, following in the way of Jesus Christ. God also calls some ordinary people to particular kinds of missional service, into what we call the ordered ministries of Deacons, Ruling Elders, and Teaching Elders or Ministers. This means our church community operates with a high degree of shared leadership, found and called from the bottom – up, rather than from the top – down.
The theme of the 223rd General Assembly (2018) is “Kindom Building for the 21st Century,” based upon Matthew 6:33 - “But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” How do we build up the Kindom of God both individually and corporately?

For the past two years, I have thought every day about what it means to be called to stand as a Ruling Elder Moderator of the 223rd General Assembly. I will admit, before this “call,” I could go days without thinking about what my role as a Christian, Presbyterian and member of the family of faith should be. I still don’t know the answers – but I do know we are all called to listen to what the Spirit is telling us – as individuals, as congregations, as presbyteries/synods, and as a denomination.

If I were to describe how to build up the “Kindom” of God, I would suggest two things:

1 – Listen to what God is already telling you:

I firmly believe that God is walking with us, right now! I love the description a former pastor gave of where the Holy Spirit is – just over our heads – just beyond our fingertips, but always there. I believe we are always in contact with God and the Holy Spirit – even if we don’t recognize it. That fleeting thought to pick up the phone and call someone you haven’t thought about in a long time, that little nag that you should volunteer to serve in the soup kitchen, or deliver flowers to a shut-in, even to go and introduce yourself to a “new” neighbor that moved in over a year ago. And then there are the bigger “To Do’s” – like attending an Ecumenical Community Service, or a street corner memorial service for a person killed by random gun violence, or even going to vote. As Jan and Denise say, “It’s just that easy… it’s just that hard.”

2- Each and every day remember the Great Commandment:

“Which commandment is the first of all?”29 Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’”31 The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

If each of us, every day, made loving our neighbor our priority, our world would be a different place. Interestingly, neighbor can be a noun or a verb:

noun
1. a person living near or next door to the speaker or person referred to.
"our garden was the envy of the neighbors"

verb
1. (of a place or thing) be situated next to or very near (another).
"the square neighbors the old quarter of the town"

In our world, where we are bombarded everyday by technology – television, radio, computers, live streaming, cell phones, social media… I would posit that virtually every person on our planet is our neighbor. If each of us truly loves the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength AND loves our neighbor as ourselves – and each day find a way, however small, to demonstrate this love, what a different world it would be.

We look forward to getting to know you over the next two years.

You can learn more about us by checking -
March 15, 2018

Rev. J. Herbert Nelson, Stated Clerk
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Rev. Nelson,

It is with great pleasure that I am writing to inform you that at its regularly stated meeting of December 5, 2017 the Presbytery of Carlisle endorsed Ruling Elder Chantal Atnip to stand for Moderator of the 223rd General Assembly. Chantal was examined by the presbytery at that meeting with emphasis on her sense of “call” as well as her understanding of the issues before the PCUSA during this time of transition. The presbytery also asked her questions about her faith and familiarity of our polity. After discussion, the presbytery enthusiastically and unanimously voted to endorse her!

Chantal’s message is one of being called to bring a message of joy and hope for a vibrant future for the church. Her message is one of sharing her call, and to encourage each and every member to be open to God’s call in this time and place.

Chantal is a member of Pine Street Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg, PA and has served faithfully on its Session and is now Pine Street’s Clerk of Session. She is a regular and faithful attendee at presbytery meetings. She also serves as the Treasurer of the Synod of the Trinity.

We are looking forward to supporting Chantal as she begins this new phase of her Faith Journey.

Peace!

Jim Speedy
Stated Clerk
We have been friends for over fifteen years. That’s longer than we’ve been ordained. We’ve witnessed each other grow into our calls as pastors with fear, doubt and wonder. We have supported one another to stand in courageous places, making our faith public, striving to honor God by naming social and racial injustice. We both have full lives surrounded by many obligations, joys, and dreams. Neither of us thought to stand for co-moderator on our own. In fact, we both replied “No, thank you.” when the idea was first presented. But after much prayer, consultation with trusted colleagues and loved ones, and a bit of wrestling with God we humbly submit ourselves to stand as co-moderators of the 223rd General Assembly.

True to tradition, our denomination is in a season of reformation. As our society moves further away from familiar religious expressions and neighbors become more estranged from neighbor we see the PCUSA actively seeking, reframing, and sometimes struggling to discover creative and prophetic ways to be Church and live faithfully into the justice, kindness, and humility God requires of us.

In a spirit of trust and obedience to the voice of God as we hear it, we offer our gifts, experience, our love for God and the Church, and a desire to see it grow. We hope to be ambassadors of all the ways God is redeeming the world and our bonds as a denomination through imaginative, faithful, and culturally transformative ministries. We rely upon God’s Spirit to provide energy, wisdom, endurance, and hope to serve this call faithfully.
Eliana Maxim

Eliana Maxim is a teaching elder in the Seattle Presbytery who has served as the presbytery’s associate executive for the past 7 years. Eliana was born in Barranquilla, Colombia and immigrated to the US as a young child with her parents, residing in Los Angeles, CA. Eliana attended Loyola Marymount University where she earned an undergraduate degree in communication arts and soon went to work as a news producer at CNN. She remained in that field for 12 years until she and her family moved to Seattle. At that time, she finally paid attention the long ignored call on her heart and began pursuing what that might mean by serving on staff at Mercer Island Presbyterian Church as director of children and family ministries from 1996-2010. During that time, she began course work at Union Seminary in Richmond, VA and then transferred to Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry where she completed a Masters in Divinity. Eliana was ordained as a minister of word and sacrament in 2011. Although she grew up Roman Catholic, Eliana has found her home in the PCUSA and served the church in a variety of ways including the 220th General Assembly’s Committee on the Belhar Confession, the 221nd General Assembly’s Committee on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Review, the Committee on the Office of General Assembly, and more recently the 222nd General Assembly’s Way Forward Commission.

Eliana is a faculty member of the Transitional Ministry Workshop at Menucha, Oregon and vice-moderator of the National Hispanic/Latino Caucus of the PCUSA. She also serves as a member of the Interfaith Leadership Council of the Washington State Faith Action Network.
In her downtime, Eliana enjoys a good book, cooking, exploring new places and meeting new people.

Eliana and her husband of 35 years, Alex, have two adult daughters Sacha and Gabi, both Seattle residents, plus a spoiled rescue Boxer dog named Lola.

Gabi, Sacha, Alex, & Eliana

Summer at the Maxims
Bertram Johnson is a member of the Presbytery of New York City and serves as Minister of Justice, Advocacy, and Change at The Riverside Church in the City of New York. Originally from Yulee, Florida, he was born into an African American, Baptist family where the teachings of his church and service to the community were fundamental in shaping his beliefs about God’s love, compassion, and justice. As a student at the University of Florida (BA ’92), volunteering for youth ministry with Young Life led him to the Presbyterian Church (USA) where he would soon become a member. During this time, through the encouragement and affirmation of his new church family, he felt the Spirit leading him to ministry as vocation. After college he moved to Washington, D.C. and spent a year serving youth and families at a neighborhood community center as an intern with Sojourners. The next four years were spent in New Jersey where he graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary (MDiv ’96) and Rutgers University (MSW ’97). After graduation, he moved to Seattle and worked for three years on the Mission Department staff at University Presbyterian.

When the denomination’s polity regarding LGBTQ ordination became more restrictive, although he was certified to receive a call and was working at Mt. Baker Park Presbyterian, Bertram decided to withdraw from the ordination process. Outside of congregational ministry he has worked as an oncology chaplain, directed spiritual and practical care programs for people living with HIV/AIDS, and promoted HIV prevention research education among disproportionately impacted communities nationally through Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

He also spent years working professionally in regional theater throughout the Northwest. Bertram felt led back to the ministry of word and sacrament while serving as Worship Director at Madrona Grace Presbyterian where he was ordained as teaching elder in January 2014.
Prior to receiving his current call in New York, he was on Seattle Presbytery's Catalyzing Missional Communities Committee and served on the General Assembly Nominating Committee. He is a member of the NEXT Church Leadership Team and was a contributor on The Sarasota Statement. He enjoys travel, exploring new food, and the performing arts.
1. The theme of the 223rd General Assembly (2018) is “Kindom Building for the 21st Century,” based upon Matthew 6:33 - “But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” How do we build up the Kindom of God both individually and corporately?

The language of the Kin-dom of God was first introduced by the mujerista theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz who inspired the church with a new revelation of our shared identity in Christ that’s broader, more compassionate and more just than “kingdom”- a term with inherent and historical understandings of oppression and empire. It moves us from a region ruled by a patriarch with power over people to an egalitarian fellowship network where all are received as members of God’s family and welcome to share in its fullest blessings.

Kin-dom reminds us we are Jesus’ siblings, and as such calls us to exhibit a life that is particular to The Way of Christ. Kin-dom puts a premium on hospitality, unconditional love, and selfless service. This theology reminds us that there is always extra space no matter how crowded the table and there is always time to do what is right in the face of the world’s chaos and violence.

Rev. Dr. Martin King Luther Jr. shared his vision of a Beloved Community, of a society that would band in justice, equal opportunity and love for all. As described at the King Center: “In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.” This is the very essence of kin-dom, and the responsibility for embodying this rightfully belongs to those who profess Jesus of Nazareth as their Lord and Savior.

The church can live into this call through its ability to extend extravagant welcome and advocacy to all, particularly those who have been marginalized, oppressed or silenced. The church can be the model of kin-dom when it places greater value on the welfare of the people it serves, on the just and holy value of all human beings, rather than its own survival. This requires the church to examine itself for how and where it has been and continues to be complicit in maintaining oppressive practices and structures, and speak into those same broken places in our culture.

We’ve witnessed the church live into this fullness by its commitment to welcome refugees and turn church buildings into true sanctuaries.
Q&A with the Co-Moderator Candidates

We’ve seen kin-dom building when congregations partner with local schools to ensure all children have the necessary resources to succeed whether they be school supplies or one-on-one tutoring. We have joined arm in arm with Presbyterians and people of other faiths, marching in support of Black Lives Matter, refusing to accept the loss of black lives as “normal” or another statistic. The church lifts up kin-dom building each time it leaves the safety of its four walls and risks the comfort and inconvenience of loving our neighbors for who they are. And we do this because this is transformative love; kin-dom building transforms us all into who God created us to be.

2. The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

The role of (Co)Moderator offers the denomination a presence of the wider church in local context, and the local church to the nationwide denomination.

KIN-DOM BUILDING TRANSFORMS US ALL INTO WHO GOD CREATED US TO BE.

The opportunity to visit and worship with local congregations throughout the country affords us the opportunity to hear how our siblings are living their faith, and we take both inspiration and courage from that connectionalism.

Despite there being some significant differences among us culturally or theologically, the (Co)Moderator can offer an encouraging voice that unites us, grounding us in the reminder that we are one body called to be church together in celebration of our many differences. We look to Paul’s prayer for the Philippians, and believe it central to the call to serve as (Co)Moderator. “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident in this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.”

We are convinced that the PC(USA) is filled with faithful people who love God deeply and want to build on the rich heritage on whose shoulders we stand. But we also recognize that we are human, and in our brokenness sometimes we are liable to stray from the centrality of our unity.
Q&A with the Co-Moderator Candidates

The (Co)Moderator can point to the threads that unite us, and call us together as one body. With the ability to visit varied and diverse Presbyterian expressions of faith, the (Co)Moderator tells the story of the truth of the Church – faithful and unfaithful - of who we have been, and upholds the calling of who God’s Spirit empowers us to be.

The (Co)Moderator also has the opportunity to serve the church by representing the PCUSA to the wider ecumenical and interfaith communities, maintain the integrity of our history and witness to the Gospel while engaging our sisters and brothers of varied faith backgrounds.

3. This assembly is taking place in St. Louis, a city that has seen divisive violence and injustice, while at the same time has been witness to opportunities to demonstrate the church’s unity and be a sign of God’s love and justice. How can the 223rd General Assembly (2018) be a sign of hope to the city and the whole church?

If the PCUSA intends to share hope with the people of St. Louis and its neighboring communities we cannot solely show up as conference goers and offer our economic support in the GA associated venues.

To seek peace and stand in solidarity with the city we must be deliberate in our engagement of the people who are most marginalized, overlooked, exploited, and silenced in the area. We must seek equitable partnerships where we learn from their experiences, hear of their struggles, and discern how we might join what God is already doing there.

We are hopeful that Presbyterians will show up in St. Louis seeking ways our individual lives and denomination as a whole can be reshaped by the movement for justice that was sparked by the justice denied to Michael Brown and the people of Ferguson. By coming alongside our sisters and brothers in a city that has been deeply scarred by systemic racial oppression and economic injustice, we declare our intolerance to this evil.

We can be of hope when we listen and follow those in St. Louis who are already working and speaking on behalf of the poor and oppressed. We do not arrive at General Assembly with answers or solutions; we come to accompany, to learn, and to magnify the voices claiming dignity for people.

Proclaiming God’s love and justice requires us to step out of comfortable places of privilege and stand in the cracks of human frailty.
Q&A with the Co-Moderator Candidates

Our prayer is that we would model kin-dom behavior at our General Assembly through our discourse of business and discernment of God’s will for the watching world. Might onlookers say about us “Look at those Presbyterians, see how they love each other and love the world.”

4. We live in a violent and war-torn world. What might the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its congregations do to strengthen our ministry of peacemaking?

Violence is the culture of the world that surrounds us and, too often, – even as disciples of Jesus - it is a flame we keep lit within. Violence is an easy answer or automatic response when we feel threatened by fear, a lack of control, or a loss of assumed power. Every movement for justice and equality in our society, whether it is civil or women’s rights, the pursuit of fair wages, political freedom, or the right to feel safe in our bodies or homes is in response to some form of violence. As followers of Jesus, whom we revere as the Prince of Peace, our denomination has the opportunity to deepen our commitment to peacemaking by being willing to stand in places where violence is normalized as a tool of hate and control, and allow faith, intellect, and imagination to guide our actions.

Poverty is a deadly form of social violence that maintains economic enslavement for generations of families in our country and around the globe. The PCUSA might align with partner denominations, other faith traditions, and activist organizations that are leveraging their influence and managing financial power in ways that challenge corporations to enact fair economic and environmental policies that benefit the masses and not just those at the top.

The ongoing sin of US militarism and empire has brought terror to millions around the world. It also continues to terrorize countless people of color and people living in poverty in every presbytery of our church. The denomination can work collectively to reform our nation’s policies around policing.

A model of community policing in areas most deeply impacted by disproportionate police presence and incarceration, as well as restorative justice ministries, are avenues to practice just leadership that preserve the dignity of families and communities.

As gun violence from the hands of our neighbors or the hands of the police becomes routine in our society we need to name and find a way to address this spiritual crisis impacting men and boys in our society.
Instead of arming teachers, we should attend to the emotional peril that causes males in our country to respond to their emotional wounds with acts of misogyny, assault, white supremacy, and other forms of dominance. Until the Church addresses faithfully this pandemic we will remain locked in a traumatic cycle of violence, shock, grief, and despair.

5. Describe the church of tomorrow – the church that is emerging. How is it different from the church of today? How is it the same?

The church of tomorrow is less concerned with membership and denominational pedigree than it is with incarnational faith, community engagement, and authentic relationships. There seems to be a desire to return to a parish model, where the church is involved in the life of the surrounding community and mission partnerships are determined not on large programmatic commitments made through denominational channels, but on local ecumenical, interfaith and secular allies.

From the vantage point of witnessing churches and working with new worshiping communities in our presbyteries, we hear how people are anxious to be church in order to “do” their faith.

How do I live my faith in the workplace? How does my faith inform my financial choices and planning? What does my faith tell me on how to get involved in issues of poverty and race justice in my neighborhood? The faithful are eager to study, worship and discuss their faith, but there also needs to be engagement in order to make discipleship real and enduring.

There also exists the reality that our world has become smaller and with the ongoing development of broad and immediate communication, our connectionalism and interrelatedness is all the more evident and immediate. For example, local churches can have direct engagement with mission partners half way around the world who are committed to similar expressions of faith and praxis. The conversation of internal displacement in one country, and how the local church has stepped into those places to walk alongside the marginalized, can inform a local PCUSA church serving homeless families in their area.

These are hopeful and exciting opportunities for the church. But there also exists the challenges these changes bring.
Q&A with the Co-Moderator Candidates

Lack of membership or affiliation desire can also mean lack of pledging and tithing for our local churches and this obviously impacts the financial health every body in our denomination from the local church through the mid-councils and onto our per capita funds that support the mission and ecclesial arms of the PCUSA.

Despite this, we find joy and hope in what never changes in the church: the Good News of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the innate desire of humanity to seek God and the sacred, and to find meaning in their lives and the world around them. These unchanging truths will propel us to find adaptive ways to be church in a changing world.

Learn More
Maxim Johnson website: www.maximjohnson.com
Maxim Johnson Facebook: facebook.com/elianabertram

WE FIND JOY AND HOPE IN WHAT NEVER CHANGES IN THE CHURCH: THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR, THE INNATE DESIRE OF HUMANITY TO SEEK GOD AND THE SACRED, AND TO FIND MEANING IN THEIR LIVES AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM.
April 2, 2018

Office of the General Assembly
Attention: Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
100 Witherspoon St.
Louisville, KY 40202

Re: Letter of Endorsement for Rev. Eliana Maxim

It is our pleasure to inform you that at its stated meeting on January 16, 2018, Seattle Presbytery elected Rev. Eliana Maxim as a teaching elder commissioner to General Assembly and wholeheartedly and unanimously endorsed her as a candidate for Co-Moderator of the 223rd General Assembly. Eliana is a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, currently an active member in good standing of Seattle Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA), where she has served as the presbytery’s associate executive for the past seven years.

Presbytery Executive Rev. Scott Lumsden describes Eliana as an integral leader both within Seattle Presbytery and among the wider church. She possesses both the faithfulness of a caring and trusted colleague and the foresight of a strategic thinker and change agent. Eliana has significantly contributed to improving and maintaining good relationships between congregations and the presbytery. She provides key leadership for all major presbytery commissions and committees, such as Mission & Vision for Congregations (COM), New Worshipping Communities, Candidates for Ministry (CPM), and Mission Partnerships (Colombia).

Eliana’s dedication and passion are also evident in the extensive work she does for the greater church. She is a member of the Interfaith Leadership Council of the Washington State Faith Action Network, vice-moderator of the National Hispanic/Latino Caucus of the PC(USA), and serves on the strategy team for NEXT Church. She’s also a faculty member of the Transitional Ministry Workshop at Menucha, Oregon. Eliana has also faithfully served the PC(USA) in a variety of ways including the 220th General Assembly’s Committee on the Belhar Confession, the 221st General Assembly’s Committee on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Review, the Committee on the Office of General Assembly, and more recently the 222nd General Assembly’s Way Forward Commission.

Grace and Peace,

[Signature]

Rev. Dean Strong, Stated Clerk
Seattle Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA)
April 23, 2018

Office of the General Assembly
Attention: Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson II
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Re: Letter of Endorsement for Reverend Bertram Johnson

It is a high honor to inform you that at the Stated Meeting on January 30, 2018, New York City Presbytery elected Rev. Bertram Johnson as a Minister Commissioner to the General Assembly and endorsed him as a candidate for Co-Moderator of the 223rd General Assembly with a grateful heart for his willingness to serve the wider church. Bertram is a Minister of Word and Sacrament and currently an active member in good standing of New York City Presbytery.

We give thanks that he and Eliana Maxim know one another well based on their shared ministry and service in the Presbytery of Seattle. Their strong relationship will serve them well as they stand for Co-Moderators of the 223rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

When the Presbytery of New York City validated his ministry as Minister for Justice, Advocacy and Change at the Riverside Church in New York City, we saw in Bertram one whose faith is in the unfathomable love, power, and grace of the God who put on flesh in Jesus and became both the message and messenger of divine love for a broken world. Bertram demonstrates his faith in his ministry at the Riverside Church, in the Presbytery of New York City and the larger church, and throughout society.

Bertram lives out his faith commitment to help both church and society think, speak, and act prophetically. He does this through his preaching, compassion in his pastoral care, nurturing coalitions that address social justice issues in and beyond New York City by sitting at regional and national tables, and collaborating with denominational and partner institutions that include seminaries and colleges. Through his leadership, the Riverside Church has endorsed the Poor People’s Campaign and works in partnership with the Presbytery and other faith-based and secular groups to achieve the goals of the campaign.

He has expressed his commitment to be part of the Church of Jesus Christ in the 21st century through his involvement in NEXT Church and with a team of writers drafting the Sarasota Statement (a contemporary statement of faith in response to the current state of the church and world). Bertram’s profound dedication to ecumenical and interfaith engagement enhances the witness of the Presbytery of New York City and reflects the direction the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) needs to move for effective ministry. He has worked with our Presbytery and our partners in New York City to address economic inequality, disrupt racism and promote racial justice, end mass incarceration, protect the environment, achieve gender and LGBTQ justice, make peace and reduce gun violence.

Grace and Peace,

Ruling Elder Warren C. McNeill, Stated Clerk
Presbytery of New York City, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
We feel called to this ministry to stand as co-moderators together to embody a spirit of love, justice, reconciliation, and hope, proclaiming what God is already doing in and through our congregations, and as witnesses of God’s grace in our lives and ministries.

Nos sentimos llamadas a este ministerio a postularnos como co-moderadoras para encarnar un espíritu de amor, justicia, reconciliación y esperanza, proclamando lo que Dios ya está haciendo en nuestras congregaciones y a través de ellas, como testigos de la gracia de Dios en nuestras vidas y ministerios.

우리는사랑, 정의, 화해와소망의정신을구현하고하나님께서우리교회를통해이미역사하고계신것을선포하며우리의삶과사역에하나님의은혜의증인이되도록이사역에헌신을선언합니다.

Nós nos sentimos chamadas para este ministério juntas para encarnar um espírito de amor, justiça, reconciliação e esperança, proclamando o que Deus já está fazendo dentro e através de nossas congregações, e como testemunhas da graça de Deus em nossas vidas e ministérios.

www.VilmarieCindy.com
About Vilmarie

Biography Bullet Points

✦ Born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, lived in Caguas & San Juan (PR), & Miami (FL)
✦ Ordained as a ruling elder as a young adult in 1994
✦ Educator with a BA in Secondary Education (ESL) - University of Puerto Rico & Master’s in Education (Curriculum and Teaching) - Turabo University, focus on teaching teenagers & adults
✦ Served as the 2017 Moderator of the Presbytery of Tropical Florida, on the Committee on Theological Education, & the Synod of the South Atlantic Chapter of the Hispanic Latino Caucus
✦ CREDO faculty member, through the Board of Pensions
✦ Part of Presbyterian Women & Mujeres Hispanas Latinas Presbiterianas groups, led workshops and Bible Studies
✦ Youth Advisory Delegate to the 205th GA, Commissioner to the 212th GA, & interpreter (Spanish/English) for the 217th to the 222nd GA
✦ Married to the Rev. José Manuel Capella-Pratts

My sense of call first became evident in the heart of the congregation that saw me grow. I was baptized there as a child, and, in its midst, I began to sense the profound love that God has for all of us. This church community guided me to understand the priesthood of all believers. It was in this understanding of ministry, with a deep love for God and the church, that I felt the call to serve as an elder and to teach for the first time.

The call to stand with Cindy as co-moderator stems from this deep love for God and the church, and my desire to serve the church at large. Serving in different capacities has provided a broad perspective of the ministries of the PC(USA), and it has also brought the blessing of cultivating relationships across the nation and abroad. Through these, I have learned what it means to be church in different contexts and environments. Through the work in school communities, I have learned the importance of being lifelong learners, of mentoring, and of fostering healthy learning environments. Both church and classroom have played important roles in discerning God’s call.

Co-standing with Cindy is a joy. Her love for God and the mission of the church is palpable and contagious. As a bridge-builder, Cindy brings a desire to foster new channels of communication and support evidenced in the work she has done in the presbyteries she serves and beyond. With grace and gladness, Cindy’s pastoral heart leads her ministry in multifaceted approaches. I am grateful for the blessing of being partners in this journey and for her presence in my life.

It is our hope to serve the PC(USA) with all that we are: two people from different backgrounds and languages, one teaching elder and one ruling elder, a beautiful vision of the parity of Presbyterian governance and the diversity of the church. We place before the assembly our gifts and, in the words of our ordination vows, seek “to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.” (W-4.4003h)

Vilmarie and José Manuel with part of her family
My sense of call rises directly from my desire to live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, which has led me to places I never dreamed I would go. From the moment I said yes to the call to be a pastor, I have sought to be open to the movement of the Spirit in my life, trusting in the abundant love of the God I worship.

This particular call to stand as co-moderator of the 223rd General Assembly alongside Vilmarie is a call to offer to the denomination I love all that I have learned and experienced as a small church pastor and leader of two small Presbyteries. I know what it is to lead through difficult and dramatic change, having shepherded a congregation that shifted from 98% white to 50% West African over the course of 2-3 years. I know how to sit within an anxious, grieving system and help people see possibility in the midst of loss, having served two Presbyteries as they shift staffing and structure to more appropriately match their current reality. I know how to say “yes” to new ideas and new endeavors, while also holding the sometimes necessary “no” gently.

It is such an honor to partner in this journey with Vilmarie. Her deep faith in Jesus, her passion for the church, her quick mind, and her generous spirit bring me joy every day. As we discuss our hopes for the PC(USA), I am excited for the possibilities she sees, and I am encouraged that these possibilities are within our reach. The gifts she brings to the table are numerous and are all grounded in love and grace.

We hope to have the opportunity to use all of the gifts we have received in service to the church we love.

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**Biography Bullet Points**

- Born in Athens, Greece to a military family, lived in Michigan, California, Naples (Italy), Washington State, Texas, Ohio, & Massachusetts
- Graduate of Whitworth College with a double major in Theatre & Religion, & a minor in Speech Communication
- Graduate of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, ordained as a teaching elder in 1999
- Four year reservist in the Navy with the Chaplain Candidate Program, serving in San Diego & Coronado (CA), South Korea, Bremerton (WA), Lakehurst (NJ), Newport (RI), & Ingleside (TX)
- 6 years as solo pastor in Carlisle (OH); 8 1/2 years as solo pastor in Clinton (MA); since 2010 with the Presbytery of Northern New England & since 2015 with the Presbytery of Boston as Resource Presbyter
- Served in various roles in four Presbyteries & two Synods, including YAD from Seattle Presbytery to the Synod of the Northwest
- Married to the Rev. Eric Markman, with two step-daughters, Lizzy & Cahaley
Questions for the Candidates

The theme of the 223rd General Assembly (2018) is “Kindom Building for the 21st Century,” based upon Matthew 6:33 - “But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” How do we build up the Kindom of God both individually and corporately?

Jesus’ call to “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness” comes at the end of his words regarding worrying and striving after daily necessities in the Sermon on the Mount. It is within this context that we believe the Kindom of God will be firmly established, both individually and corporately: when scarcity becomes abundance, safety overcomes insecurity, marginalization is replaced by full community, and daily needs are no longer in question for any person.

Individually, the call to strive for the Kindom of God leads us to examine positions of privilege and power, and confront the insidious whisper of entitlement that that leads us to believe that our needs and our wants are interchangeable and equal. The worries of those with power and privilege can seem urgent and of ultimate importance, but rarely rise to the level of issues of life and death. Because the membership of the PC(USA) is predominantly white, well-educated, and middle to upper middle class, we are especially called to unlearn lessons of “me first” and “my way or the highway,” and instead learn to rely more tangibly on God’s provision.

Corporately, the call to strive for the Kindom of God convinces the body of Christ to move beyond individual change and to advocate for and demand societal change as well. Paul’s description of the body of Christ reminds us that when one part of the body suffers, all parts suffer, and that all parts are essential and intentional. This compliments Jesus’ reminder that loving our neighbor is as important as loving God. If this is true, then corporately committing to strive for the Kindom of God means striving in love for the day when all people are free from want, from hunger, from nakedness, from violence, from need.

We see evidence of the Kindom of God around us and can tell stories of how individuals and congregations, people and movements are striving to establish a world where all are valued and no one worries about basic necessities. In New Hampshire, faith communities rallied to pressure state and federal officials to stop deporting members of the Indonesian community. In Deerfield Beach, Florida, presbytery leaders and congregations met to worship together and to find ways to aid those rebuilding in the wake Hurricanes Irma and Maria. In Boston, Massachusetts, churches and nonprofits are partnering to tackle food insecurity through the Boston Food Justice Young Adult Volunteer Program. In Parkland, Florida, pastors and counselors made themselves available in the aftermath of gun violence and a community gathered to spark a movement.

When we engage in “Kindom Building for the 21st Century,” we strive for communities of faith, hope, and love, where there is no need to worry, for individually and corporately, we hold each other up.
Questions for the Candidates

The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.I.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.

Moderators are a living representation of the council that elects them. The role is of great importance as it encompasses the goals, resolutions, and aspirations of the people that met in that particular time and place. Countless hours of preparation, worship, conversation in hallways, sharing of meals, and tending to the business as a denomination creates a particular relationship between those who served as commissioners and advisory delegates and their moderator/co-moderators. When visiting with congregations and councils, or attending meetings of the PC(USA) committees or agencies, moderators serve as ambassadors of the Assembly that elected them and as communicators of the stories learned along the way.

Having witnessed Assembly meetings before, it is interesting to see how this kinship develops, and how moderators embody the unique bond that results from living the experience of being ecclesia – church, assembly – together for a week. Inspiring moderators, vice moderators, and co-moderators have led the assembly with fairness, care, and even humor as debate extended into the late hours of the night. These were, and are, leaders that, once the assembly adjourned, connected with the church at large not from a pedestal, but from a position of service, listening intently to the stories of joys and sorrows in our congregations, councils, and beyond, and sharing those stories. They have invited the denomination to reflect on mission, diversity, inclusion, social justice, ecumenical and interfaith work, and the role of the PC(USA) in our communities and world.

These actions during and after the assembly exemplify the importance of the role as moderators as they seek to lead orderly and efficient business meetings (G-3.0104) and be ambassadors of “the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.” As stewards of the manifold grace of God (I Peter 4:10), the moderators of the General Assembly serve the church with graciousness, humility, joy, and love, giving voice to what has been done, and pointing towards where Jesus is now calling us.

As co-moderators we wish to honor this tradition of responding to God’s call to serve, leading the assembly in grace-filled ways, making sure that the diversity of voices and points of view are being heard, and that order is maintained.

As ambassadors of the 223rd GA, we wish to honor God by representing “the bond, union, community and mission” among congregations and councils (G-3.0501) in a manner that reflects God’s love and the assembly’s commitment to being church together. It is our desire to embody a spirit of joy, hope, and reconciliation, celebrating the abundance of the PC(USA) and respecting the context where each congregation, council and organization serves. Living out that call, we also aspire to uphold this assembly’s theme, “Kingdom Building for the 21st Century,” recognizing that the kingdom is at hand and sharing the Good News through word and deed.
Questions for the Candidates

This assembly is taking place in St. Louis, a city that has seen divisive violence and injustice, while at the same time has been witness to opportunities to demonstrate the church’s unity and be a sign of God’s love and justice. How can the 223rd General Assembly (2018) be a sign of hope to the city and the whole church?

Even before commissioners and advisory delegates arrive, the 223rd General Assembly has already made an impact. The moment the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy learned they would be hosting this gathering of the PC(USA), a pebble dropped into water; the ripples are still going out, and will continue to long after the assembly adjourns. This Presbytery is already showing us what it looks like to seek after the church’s unity and be a sign of God’s love and justice.

Hosting such a massive event requires coordination, collaboration, and cooperation, and the work of preparing to welcome hundreds of people from around the world presents a steep learning curve. Volunteers from different communities and backgrounds began to work with one another years ago. New conversations, new partnerships, and new connections were formed and strengthened. And when this happens, we begin to develop relationships, we hear each other’s stories, we pray for each other’s pain and joy, and our lives are changed.

Some of those new connections are with organizations and movements outside of the Presbyterian church, especially when responses to racial injustice and systemic violence arose and the church was asked to be present as servants, not as leaders. This is another lesson we can learn from the city of St. Louis itself; we can be signs of hope pointing to God’s love and justice by following the lead of others who literally have their finger on the pulse of daily life.

Just as our host Presbytery has been changed through this process, we are changed as commissioners, advisory delegates, observers, and friends. We are changed when we gather as the General Assembly and immerse ourselves in the work of the church while seeking to be guided by the Holy Spirit. All of us, coming from our own contexts and congregations, bring our own stories of division, violence, and injustice, and we also bring our hopes for unity, love, and wholeness. If we come willing to learn and willing to listen to the voices of the city around us, we will hear the story of how churches can come together with their neighbors to stand for racial and economic justice, and we can learn how collaboration hand in hand with diversity bears sweet fruit.

When we return to our congregations and communities, we will have an opportunity to witness to what we have seen and heard in St. Louis. Efforts like the Hands and Feet Initiative will have provided us an opportunity to be partners for lasting change in St. Louis and the state of Missouri, and will perhaps inspire us to imagine new ways of engaging our own communities. We will point to our new conversations and new connections, and we will be able to say that there is hope for healing, that love can indeed drive out fear, and that together we can work for justice.

WE CAN BE SIGNS OF HOPE POINTING TO GOD’S LOVE AND JUSTICE BY FOLLOWING THE LEAD OF OTHERS WHO LITERALLY HAVE THEIR FINGER ON THE PULSE OF DAILY LIFE.
In our interactions as Presbyterians with people of other religions and faith traditions, we seek respectful dialogical relationships and authentic witness. How do dialogue and witness help Presbyterians support those of other religious traditions who are targeted with hate speech and acts of violence?

In its introduction, the Interreligious Stance of the PC(USA) published in 2014 begins with the following statement: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) long has advocated positive relationships with people of other religious traditions. We have seen these relationships as a specific instance of Christ’s universal command to ‘... love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind’ and to ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Mt. 22:37, 39) These words guide the church as it approaches interreligious efforts, “love” being the imperative in the statement.

We are both blessed by being part of interreligious families. In our family interactions, we respect each other’s point of view and have found common ground in our love for one another, in the joy of balancing dialogue with witness. Because of these relationships, we have witnessed the damage of hate speech and violence, creating an environment of fear and mistrust. We have seen the effects of discourse that claims to know the principles of other faiths without engaging in honest and authentic conversations with members of those religious communities, taking at face value less than reputable sources that spread hearsay and misinformation. These efforts promote hate instead of love, conflict instead of peace, and competition instead of cooperation under the veil of religious integrity. These acts are a far cry from the values we seek to uphold as Reformed Christians.

Hate discourse and violence have no place in the Church. It is our responsibility to repent from instances when we have been complicit, by action or inaction, in practices that promote misinformation, hate, and violence. It is not our place as Christians to judge, but to love and serve alongside siblings from other faith traditions in the pursuit of peace, justice and reconciliation. In that spirit, there is still a need for our congregations and councils to be intentional in providing and fostering spaces for education, fellowship, and dialogue.

Though the church has been less than gracious throughout history in relating to our siblings from other faiths, we continue to look for ways to do and be better. Articles published in the Presbyterian News Service witness to this commitment, sharing news of multi-faith communities, interreligious dialogues and events, and the work of the General Assembly Committee of Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations. As a denomination, we are providing opportunities for education and dialogue from Redwood Falls, Minnesota to Miami, Florida, and beyond. When we stand with the marginalized and when we speak in support of the underrepresented, we are working towards peace, justice, and reconciliation.¹

We commend to all the Interreligious Stance adopted by the 221st General Assembly as a guide to help engage in healthy and transformative interfaith endeavors. Our prayer is that Presbyterians continue to live into Jesus’ call to love and serve our neighbor, and that, along with our siblings from other faiths, we may grow into a better understanding and a stronger support of each other.

¹The Interreligious Stance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) As Approved by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) 221st General Assembly (2014), page 4
Describe the church of tomorrow – the church that is emerging. How is it different from the church of today? How is it the same?

The church that is emerging is a reflection of the Kingdom of God, where the radical love of Jesus Christ is on full display, the power of the Holy Spirit is blowing us to new places, and the creative force of Almighty God is breaking out in new ways.

This emerging church is diverse in many ways, because all are welcome and fully integrated into the life, ministry, and mission of the community. Worship reflects this diversity, with music, liturgy, ritual, and traditions from all over the world woven together. The gathered congregation reflects the community, and is connected to the needs and joys of their neighbors. The leadership of the church is also diverse, with young people learning valuable skills and long-time participants acting as mentors and encouragers.

As a tangible and visible sign of the Kingdom of God, the emerging church also looks like the early community described in Acts 4:32-33:

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Because the believers of the emerging church are of one heart and soul, they are able to enter into difficult conversations around race and privilege, poverty and entitlement, the sustainability of creation and our role in caring for the earth, hearing one another in love and coming to new commitments to action together. This unity leads the emerging church to be active in the world, extending the Kindom of God to the ends of the earth. The grace of Jesus Christ is manifest in this emerging community, and it is a grace that is shared freely.

The emerging church values the joys and challenges of being part of a connectional body; involvement beyond the local setting is encouraged. Partnerships and collaboration with local movements, regional organizations, national and international councils, and through online platforms are celebrated. These outward looking partnerships create a circle of energy, intelligence, imagination, and love, as new endeavors and experiences are brought back to the local body of Christ or sent out to be shared with the connectional church.

Like the church that has nurtured our parents and grandparents, the emerging church is grounded in the heart of our Reformed heritage as described in The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity: “Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God.” (F-1.0202) The church Jesus is calling into being now is inextricably linked with the church through the ages.

Just as we see the Kindom of God breaking through around the PC(USA), we also see this church of tomorrow emerging today. The Lord of yesterday, today, and tomorrow is indeed doing a new thing in our midst!

Thanks be to God!
March 1, 2017

The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
The Presbyterian Church (USA)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Mr. Stated Clerk,

Greetings in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

It is our sincere joy to have this opportunity to share with you the news that the Presbytery of Tropical Florida has endorsed Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri to stand for co-moderator of the 223rd General Assembly.

Vilmarie recently served as the moderator of the Presbytery. In that experience we saw her lead us with compassion, passion, and fairness. Her goal was order, making sure everyone had an opportunity to be heard, and leading with abundant joy—those goals were met and exceeded. Her contagious exuberance for Christ and her beautiful way of pulling people together signal her capacity for leadership in the church.

During Vilmarie’s moderatorial year at Tropical Florida, many changes occurred. A new vision began to grow, a new General Presbyter began service, and the Presbytery started to give shape to what it believes it is called to be and do in the coming years. Throughout this process conversations on vibrancy and what vibrancy looks like were continually held. Vilmarie was at the center of helping to encourage those conversations and seek a new way forward in ministry. This work has drawn the congregations of the presbytery together. During her tenure we have been able to claim the words “Vibrant Together” as self-descriptive. Vilmarie has been a catalyst in drawing us together and bringing clarity to who we are and who we might become as the church in South Florida.

As ones who have worked personally and closely with Ruling Elder Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri, we have come to know her dedication and loyalty to the work and witness of the church. She is a life-long Presbyterian who comes from generations of leaders. When she was installed as moderator, some of her family from Puerto Rico were with us. It became clear that Vilmarie’s family is extended well beyond those she cherishes in Puerto Rico. She was readily introducing us to her family as her brothers and sisters. This kinship is part of the very fabric of her being.

“Empowering Congregations to be Vibrant Christ-Centered Communities”
Tropical Florida is a presbytery with incredibly diverse congregations and communities. Vilmarie is able to traverse every ethnic, racial, cultural, and socio-economic boundary. Through language, technology, and willingness to be present, we have come to know deeply that Vilmarie is a Ruling Elder who will welcome all and be welcomed by all.

This is a moment when the church needs not only skills for leadership, but also leaders who love others with compassion and grace. Such is Vilmarie! In a recent visit to the church where Vilmarie’s husband is the pastor, where the English speaking General Presbyter was the preacher for the day, she served as the interpreter. Not only did she translate, but she served as an ambassador who made sure he was welcomed and comfortable at every moment in the day. Such hospitality and generosity characterize Vilmarie.

This hospitality, generosity, and a deep love for the Presbyterian Church USA and our witness for Christ are the qualities that Ruling Elder Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri will bring to the office of co-moderator for the 223rd General Assembly.

It is with joy that we share the news of our endorsement of her standing for co-moderator! We are thrilled to commend her standing with Rev. Cindy Kohlmann for co-moderator of the 223rd General Assembly.

En la paz de Cristo,

[Daris Bultena’s signature]
Daris Bultena, General Presbyter
Presbytery of Tropical Florida

[Signature]
L. Windy Johnston, Stated Clerk
Presbytery of Tropical Florida
February 7, 2018

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church, USA

Dear Rev. Nelson,

It is my honor to inform you that on November 27, 2017, the Presbytery of Boston enthusiastically nominated and endorsed the Rev. Cindy Kohlmann to serve as co-moderator of the 223rd General Assembly. Our partner Presbytery of Northern New England voted on December 2, 2017 unanimously and with a standing ovation to also endorse her to stand for co-moderator.

Cindy and I have worked together for three years serving the Presbyteries of Boston and Northern New England. Working closely with her has been one of the high points of my ministry. I would like to highlight some of the many significant achievements of her service to these presbyteries.

The region of New England is one of the most un-churched areas of the country. “Progressive Evangelism” is what we have called our intentionality in reaching out to our communities. As part of this effort, we have formed eight new worshipping communities. Cindy has been instrumental in forming partnerships and inspiring these new pastors, especially with helping them find needed funding and other resources.

During her time as Resource Presbyter of the two presbyteries, she brought many congregations that had been at the margins of presbytery life into closer partnership with one another. This meant helping rural and urban congregations, and congregations of marginalized ethnic groups, to gather for fellowship, to learn, and to serve together. It also meant joining congregations together from across the theological spectrum, from progressive to evangelical, to discover and engage in our common vocation.

In our multicultural presbyteries, we have many members with diverse immigration statuses. Cindy has led us in an effort to support our immigrant congregations by partnering with advocacy groups and numerous other institutions, seeking out honest attorneys, and inviting us to be present at peaceful demonstrations. These efforts have given us the opportunity to learn and practice how to truly love our neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable.

With so many others in our denomination, both presbyteries continue to learn about how to bear witness to the gospel in our social justice vocation. Through Cindy’s leadership, both Presbyteries have been engaged in studies on white privilege and racism, and have begun to engage with the Poor People’s Campaign.
In all of this work, Cindy has been a bridge-builder. This has been true throughout her entire ministry. For eight years she served as the pastor of a congregation in Clinton, MA. During her tenure there, many Cameroonian members joined the congregation. By the time she left about half of the congregation was Cameroonian. During those years she worked tirelessly to help the White and Cameroonian communities get to know and appreciate one another, and to work closely together in the cause of the gospel. Three years after her departure, this congregation is still a thriving multicultural community.

The Rev. Chip Stapleton, a former moderator of the Presbytery of Boston, had this to say about Cindy: “We have ethnic, political, social, theological and economic diversity, and yet Cindy is able to work with, serve and genuinely connect with all of these diverse populations and groups. She doesn't hesitate to share her view and insight when appropriate, but manages to do so in a way that invites openness and encourages others to share and engage as well.” Ruling Elder Mary Bryant, former moderator of the Presbytery of Northern New England, had this to say: “As Resource Presbyter of two very different presbyteries (urban and suburban/rural), I have watched Cindy work to bring these two presbyteries together to become unified in their work for Christ. She encourages us to put our differences aside and focus on the things that God has commanded us to do, together. We pray together, learn together, fellowship together, and worship together.”

Here in the Presbyteries of Boston and Northern New England, we are excited about the possibility of Cindy being our next co-moderator. I personally would be very proud to call her the co-moderator of the 223rd General Assembly.

In Christ,

Rev. Theodore J. DeMarco

Rev. T. J. DeMarco, Stated Clerk
Presbyteries of Boston and Northern New England