

# 2010 ASSEMBLY IN BRIEF

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Photo by Danny Bolin

The plenary hall at the 219th General Assembly (2010)  
at the Minneapolis Convention Center



Photo by Tony Oltmann

Elder Jay Bender  
of Coastal Carolina  
Presbytery spoke  
at Thursday's press  
conference on social  
justice issues.



# ASSEMBLY in brief 2010

July 3-10 • Minneapolis, Minnesota • PC(USA)

*Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.*

With an unusually large number of contentious issues on the agenda, the 219th General Assembly (2010)—with the theme “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38)—could have been a stormy crossing. That it wasn’t is a tribute to the spirit of civility and unity that predominated among the 712 commissioners and 200 advisory delegates who diligently adhered to their commissions “to discern the mind of Christ.”

They were also well-served by two calm and competent leaders—Moderator Cynthia Bolbach and Stated Clerk Gradye Parsons. While no Assembly produces consensus on many issues, the 219th General Assembly demonstrated Presbyterian governance at its best—elders, ministers and advisers worshipping, laughing, praying, singing, studying, debating and navigating potentially treacherous waters together to seek the best way forward for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Bolbach, an elder from National Capital Presbytery, was elected moderator opening night (July 3) on the fourth ballot. She was the only elder in the field of six candidates. Bolbach employed brief answers and a winsome sense of humor to steadily gain ground, rising from 149 votes (30%) of the votes on the first ballot to 325 votes (53%) on the decisive fourth ballot. None of the other five candidates—the Rev. Julia Leeth of Santa Barbara Presbytery, the Rev. James Belle of Philadelphia Presbytery, the Rev. Maggie Lauterer of Western North Carolina Presbytery, the Rev. Eric Nielsen of Northern Waters Presbytery,

and the Rev. Jin S. Kim of host Twin Cities Area Presbytery—exceeded 23% of the vote on any ballot.

Bolbach’s running mate for vice-moderator, the Rev. Landon Whitsitt, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Liberty, MO (Heartland Presbytery) was installed later in the week.



Moderator  
Cynthia  
Bolbach



## Middle East peace



Photo by Danny Bolin

The Rev. Karen Dimon was moderator of the Assembly Committee on Middle East Peacemaking Issues.

The Assembly voted 558–119 (82%–17%) to approve “Breaking Down the Walls,” the report from the Assembly’s Middle East Study Committee. The amended report, which was hotly debated in the days leading up to the Assembly, affirms Israel’s right to exist as a sovereign nation within secure and internationally recognized borders and commends for study “A Moment of Truth”—a statement by Palestinian Christian leaders that emphasizes hope for liberation, nonviolence, love of enemy and reconciliation. It also calls for the Israeli and Egyptian governments to limit their blockade of Gaza solely to military equipment and authorizes a seven-member Monitoring Group on the Middle East to assist with implementation of the church’s policy in the region. The Assembly deleted two historical analysis sections—by Palestinian Christians and a “Liberal Zionist”—from the 172-page report and ordered their replacement with “a series of eight narratives” arising from the range of “authentically” Palestinian Christian, Muslim and Israeli perspectives.

The Assembly voted 529–135 to refer a theological paper on the relationship between Christians and Jews back to the offices of Interfaith Relations and Theology and Worship for revision. Opponents of the paper—“Christians and Jews: People of God”—argued that the paper is flawed because Palestinian Christians were not included in its development. A paper on Christian-Muslim relations that calls for greater dialogue, understanding and cooperation between Christians and Muslims was adopted 548–29.



Photo by Danny Bolin

The auditorium was filled with joyful noise during the opening worship on Sunday morning.



Photo by Tony Oltmann

Minister Commissioner Calvin Gittner using his iPhone during the Church and Social Media gathering on Wednesday.

Elder Cynthia (Cindy) Bolbach, Moderator of the 219th General Assembly (2010) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at the Moderator’s Reception.



Photo by Danny Bolin



Photo by Tony Oltmann

Ally Poole, a Young Adult Advisory Delegate, leads the plenary session in an energizer.



Photo by Danny Bolin

YAAD Beatrix Weil asks a question from the plenary floor.



**Andrew Murray Award (Presbyterian Voices for Justice):** Ann and Manley Olson of Falcon Heights, MN, for their longtime justice advocacy work.

**Community Transformation Award (Presbyterian Association for Community Transformation):** Rebuilding Hope in New Orleans (RHINO), a ministry of St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church.

**Breaking the Silence Award (Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network):** LACASA, a domestic violence ministry related to First Presbyterian Church, Brighton, MI.

**Faith in Action Award (Presbyterian AIDS Network):** Red Ribbon Fellowship, a ministry of First Presbyterian Church, Elizabeth, NJ.

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**John R. Thomas Award (Presbyterian Association of Specialized Pastoral Ministries):** San Francisco Theological Seminary, home to the Shaw Family Chair for Clinical Pastoral Education, the only endowed CPE chair in the world.

**Whole Gospel Congregation Award (Presbyterian Voices for Justice):** Kwanzaa Community Church in Minneapolis, for its commitment to justice in church and society.

**Nancy Jennings Award (Presbyterians for Disability Concerns):** The Rev. David E. Young, for his work with The Arc of Midland, which promotes the welfare of and participation in church and society by persons with developmental disabilities in Midland, MI. C. Lynn Cox, from Presbyterians for Disability Concerns, presented the award.



The Rev. Yena Hwang, Chair of Korean American Presbyterian Clergy Women, was a co-celebrant for Communion during Sunday worship.

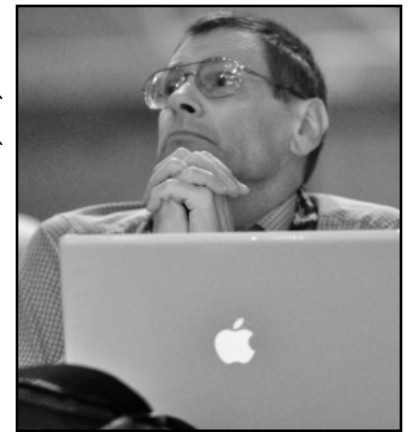
### Ordination standards

The Assembly voted 373–323 (53%–46%) to delete the current G-6.0106b from the *Book of Order* that requires “fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness,” and replace it with language reading: “*Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life. The governing body responsible for ordination and/or installation shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of office. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation. Governing bodies shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.*”

The 2008 Assembly sent a similar measure to the 173 presbyteries. It was narrowly defeated. This will be the fourth time proposed amendments to G-6.0106b have been submitted to the presbyteries since the provision was placed in the PC(USA)’s *Book of Order* following the 208th General Assembly (1996).



The General Assembly Mission Council’s display “Mission Experience, Experience Mission” was a big attraction in the exhibit hall.



David Hampton, a Minister Commissioner from the Cascades, watches the business of the plenary session on Thursday.

## Civil unions and Christian marriage

The Assembly voted to maintain the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s current definition of marriage as "between a man and a woman." In voting 439–208 to approve the report of its Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage, the Assembly turned back several overtures seeking to change the constitutional definition of marriage in the Directory for Worship to "two people."

The report calls for further discussion of issues around the church's understanding of marriage and same-sex unions and the development of resources that will help guide presbyteries, sessions and ministers, particularly in states that have legalized gay marriage. The Assembly also voted to send to the churches a minority report that defends what its supporters call a more "traditionalist" stance against any sexual relations outside heterosexual marriage.

The Assembly voted 366–287 to urge the Board of Pensions to extend the same spousal and dependent benefits to same-gender domestic partners as it does to married plan members. It also approved an increase in BOP pension dues of up to 1 percent, effective Jan. 1, 2012, to cover the cost of the additional benefits. To address concerns that the added benefit would create a moral dilemma for some church employers, the resolution includes a provision urging the BOP to create a "relief of conscience" fund to segregate dues of employers who are conscientiously opposed to same-gender benefits. The Board has a similar provision for employers who object to their dues being used to pay for abortion procedures.

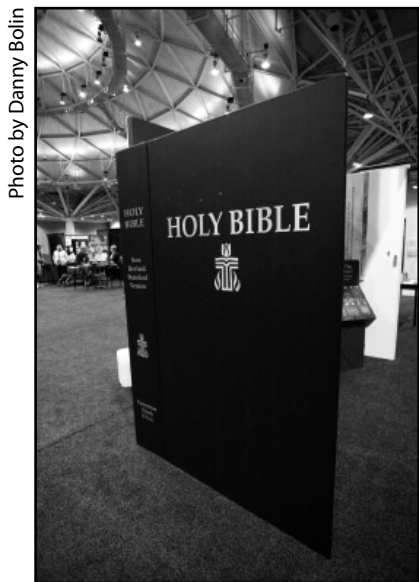


Photo by Danny Bolin



Photo by Danny Bolin

The Rev. Rick Nutt, moderator of the Assembly Committee on Civil Union and Marriage Issues, confers with committee assistant the Rev. Carol McDonald and resource coordinator the Rev. Vernon Broyles.

An oversized Bible was a fun part of the GAMC "Mission Experience, Experience Mission," display in the exhibit hall.

**Peace-Seeker Award (Presbyterian Peace Fellowship):** Bill Galvin and Mel Duncan (pictured together at right).



Photo by Danny Bolin

**William Gibson Award (Presbyterians for Earth Care):** The Rev. Robert L. Stivers of Tacoma, WA, a pioneer in Christian environmental ethics; and the Rev. Kristina Peterson, pastor of Bayou Blue First Presbyterian Church in Gray, LA.

**Outstanding More Light Church (More Light Presbyterians):** St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Wayzata, MN.

**David Sindt Leadership Award (More Light Presbyterians):** The Rev. Jean Southard, Mansfield, Mass. (pictured at right).



Photo by Danny Bolin

**Ernest Trice Thompson Award (Presbyterian Outlook Foundation):** The Rev. Syngman Rhee, a native of North Korea, who has worked tirelessly for ecumenical understanding, Presbyterian world mission and the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea.



Photo by Tony Oltmann

**Restoring Creation Award (Presbyterians for Earth Care):** North Como Presbyterian Church, Roseville, MN.



Photo by Danny Bolin

**David Hancock Award (Presbyterians for Addiction Action):** Susan Koll, chairwoman of Faith Partners in St. Paul, MN, a network of more than 300 faith groups addressing addiction prevention and treatment around the country. The Rev. Nancy K. Troy, above left, presented the award at the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA) luncheon.

## Awards

**Women of Faith Awards:** Elder Joyce Uyeda, Parkview Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, CA, and moderator of Ethnic Concerns Consultation; the Rev. Elizabeth Knott, retired executive of the Synod of Alaska-Northwest and founder of Pal Craftaid, which helps Palestinians find markets for their olive wood and needlework crafts; Elder Elona Street-Stewart, associate executive for the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and a leading advocate for racial justice, peace and equal opportunity; and the Rev. Margaret Howland, the 12th woman ordained to the ministry in the Presbyterian Church and pastor emeritus of South Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, NY.



Elder Elona Street-Stewart



The Rev. Elizabeth (Liz) B. Knott



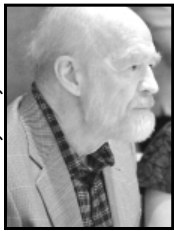
The Rev. Margaret (Peggy) Howland



The Rev. Joyce Uyeda

Photos by Danny Bolin

Photo by Tony Oltmann



**David Steele Distinguished Writer Award (Presbyterian Writers Guild):** The Rev. Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message* version of the Bible and other works

**Lifetime Achievement Award (Presbyterian Writers Guild):** Presbyterian poet Ann Weems.

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**Jim Angell Award (Presbyterian Writers Guild):** Rebecca Barnes-Davies for her book, *50 Ways to Help Save the Earth: How You and Your Church Can Help Make a Difference*, chosen 2009's best first book by a Presbyterian writer

Photo by Tony Oltmann



**Excellence in Theological Education Award (Committee on Theological Education):** Elder Barbara Wheeler, recently retired president of Auburn Theological Seminary and founder of the Center for the Study of Theological Education

Photo by Danny Bolin



**God and Service Award (National Association of Presbyterian Scouters):** Dave Moore, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis.

## Governance

The Assembly voted 468–204 to approve a massive revision of the Form of Government that has been worked and reworked over the last four years. The Form of Government has been amended more than 300 times since it was adopted in 1983 at Presbyterian reunion. The revisions are intended to make it less regulatory and more missional. Assembly Committee on Form of Government Revision moderator Tim Beal of Baltimore Presbytery said the new Form of Government is “clear about standards but allows flexibility for councils (governing bodies) to best determine how to express those standards.” The revision now goes to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes.

The Assembly voted 566–104 to create a 21-member middle governing body commission with authority to act on the Assembly's behalf in responding to realignment requests from synods and presbyteries. In response to concerns that the commission might be able to act unilaterally to change synod and presbytery structures, the Assembly adopted an amendment that makes explicit that the commission can only act “upon a majority affirmative vote of the affected presbytery or presbyteries or a majority affirmative vote of the presbyteries in the affected synod or synods.” The Assembly's action also requires that all decisions of the commission be approved by a two-thirds majority.

Also assigned to the new commission is supervision of the work of the Assembly's Special Committee on Administrative Review of the Synod of Boriquen in Puerto Rico and Its Constituent Presbyteries. The special committee, appointed by the 2008 Assembly, reported that the synod “is rife with power struggles among individuals, groups, and the middle governing bodies of the synod . . . that undermine the ability of the church in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to focus on Christ's Great Commission.”



Photo by Dennis Sanders

Phyllis Tickle, founding editor of the religion department at Publishers Weekly and author of *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why*, was the guest speaker at several special events during the Assembly.

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Photo by Kim Coulter

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Debby Applegate was on hand to sign her books sold at the Cokesbury booth in the GA Exhibit Hall on Tuesday afternoon. She was the guest speaker earlier in the day for the Presbyterian Historical Society's Luncheon.



Photo by Danny Bolin

Attendees at the World Mission Commissioning Service Thursday at the 2010 General Assembly

## Doctrinal statements

By a voice vote, the Assembly voted to continue work on correcting “incomplete and insufficient” translation of the Heidelberg Catechism from the original German into English in cooperation with the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the Reformed Church in America. Those denominations are working on similar corrective translations of five questions in the catechism.

The Assembly voted 525–150 to send the Belhar Confession to the presbyteries for their votes to include it as the 12th doctrinal statement in the denomination’s *Book of Confessions*. The Belhar Confession was developed in the mid-1980s by the South African churches as their theological response to the racism of apartheid. The confession is valuable, proponents say, because it seeks to address issues of racial justice and reconciliation that are still relevant today.

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Photo by Danny Bolin

## Leaders

The Assembly confirmed the General Assembly Mission Council’s election of elder Linda Valentine to a second four-year term as executive director of the General Assembly Mission Council; the Rev. Tom Taylor as president of the Presbyterian Foundation; the Rev. Stephen A. Hayner as president of Columbia Theological Seminary; the Rev. Michael Jinkins as president of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary; and the Rev. Paul T. Roberts as president and dean of Johnson C. Smith Seminary in Atlanta.

Linda Valentine, Executive Director of the General Assembly Mission Council



Photo by Danny Bolin

“Having just crossed the Red Sea, the Israelites must have wondered, ‘What has God planned?’ Then Miriam stands up with a tambourine in hand and begins to sing. Her song reminds the people of their God, who delivered them from slavery. It creates a path into that unknown wilderness ahead.”

—2010 seminary graduate Taylor Lewis Guthrie



Photo by Danny Bolin

Many of the women of the Kenyan Fellowship Choir, St. Paul, MN., wore traditional African clothing as part of worship on Thursday.



Photo by Danny Bolin

“If you have been baptized in the waters of baptism, then you are part of one body, and we are family. It’s not anything we do or do not do. We associate with each other not because we like each other, although sometimes we do. We come together because we are related.”

—The Rev. Peg Chamberlin, president of the National Council of Churches



Photo by Danny Bolin

“Storms are scariest in the middle. Often in the middle is when that question ‘Where is your faith?’ is asked. It’s in the middle when we are not where we used to be and don’t know where we’re going that it’s really very scary. Jesus’ words? ‘Get in the boat, go across the lake, there will be a storm, you will not die.’”

—General Assembly Stated Clerk the Rev. Gradye Parsons

# Worship



Participants at Tuesday morning worship

Photo by Danny Bolin

“We say to a generation of people every day, by the ways that we engage in church and community, ‘I don’t care about your needs or yearnings. I sort of like this mountain I’m living on.’”

—The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the 218th General Assembly (2008)



Photo by Danny Bolin

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Photo by Danny Bolin

“All water comes from the same source: God. The church now is made up of small bodies of water separated by theological beliefs. If we are able to become one body of water, we will be able to nourish the world. If that water is contaminated by dividing agendas and judgments, then we are not able to give life to the world.”

—The Rev. Ruth-Aimee Belonni-Rosario, associate director of admissions at Princeton Theological Seminary

“Imagine how many souls could be won if we praised God both in season and out. Imagine if our demeanor matched our doctrine. Imagine bringing the whole world to the living water poured out for them.”

—College student Hakeem Jerome Jefferson of Goodwill Presbyterian Church, Mayesville, SC



Photo by Danny Bolin

# ‘Grow Christ’s Church Deep and Wide’

The Assembly voted to renew for two more years a denomination-wide church growth emphasis titled “Grow Christ’s Church Deep and Wide.” The emphasis was first adopted by the 2008 General Assembly and encourages congregations to grow in four areas: evangelism, discipleship, servanthood and diversity.

The Assembly honored eight retiring overseas missionaries who have served the PC(USA) for more than 20 years: the Revs. Dan and Carol Chou Adams, 36 years in Taiwan and the Republic of Korea; Scott Smith (32 years) and Melanie Smith (30 years) in Bangladesh, Nepal and India; Virginia Gartrell, 28 years in Brazil; the Rev. Thomas and Carol Hastings, 20 years in Japan; and Kathryn Hoffman, 20 years in India.



Photo by Danny Bolin

The World Mission Commissioning Service included recognition of PC(USA) mission co-workers who have 20 or more years of mission service.

Minister Commissioner Beth Braxton and Festus Gitonga, an Ecumenical Representative from the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, have a heartfelt conversation during the Simple Meal on Monday.



Photo by Tony Oltmann



Photo by Tony Oltmann

Steve Hayner, President of Columbia Seminary, was the guest speaker at the Evangelism Breakfast on Thursday.

Julia Glasgow, 9, of Junction City, KS, and her sister Hannah, 11, at the Assembly.



Photo by Danny Bolin



Judy Maul and Carole Killpatrick were two of hundreds of local volunteers who worked with the Committee on Local Arrangements to host the 219th Assembly.

## Social justice

The Assembly voted 420–205 to “refrain from holding national meetings in states where travel by immigrant Presbyterians or Presbyterians of color might subject them to harassment or racial profiling.” The action came in light of a recently enacted Arizona law that many feel unfairly targets Hispanic Americans.

The Assembly also approved recommendations calling for:

- An immediate moratorium on all executions in the United States;
- Establishing a theological wetlands education center in the Presbytery of South Louisiana;
- The church at every level to become informed and active in preventing gun violence;
- Increased attention to human rights, particularly in the areas of human trafficking, detention of immigrants and the continuing problem of torture;
- The PC(USA) to become “an HIV and AIDS competent church,” including encouraging all Presbyterians, especially ministers, to be tested to help eliminate the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS testing;
- Reaffirmation of the PC(USA)’s longstanding commitment to public education and equal educational opportunity for all children;
- Renewed efforts to combat violence against women and children along the U.S.-Mexico border;
- A General Assembly Mission Council-led review of compensation policies in the agencies of the church in light of the 14 compensation principles adopted by the 2001 General Assembly; and a study that assesses the long-term implications of current economic trends in the United States and their impacts on the church.



Photo by Danny Bolin

Vice Moderator the Rev. Landon Whitsitt



Photo by Danny Bolin

Assembly assistant Laura Cheifetz takes a break from a hectic round of activity Monday afternoon.

## International peacemaking

The Assembly called for the U.S. government to end direct combat operations in Afghanistan, the first time since the war began in 2001 that the Assembly has issued such a call. The action also calls for the United States to increase humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan.

On a broader front, the Assembly authorized a denominational study to consider new thinking and approaches to peacemaking and nonviolence, building on the PC(USA)’s 1980 statement “Peacemaking: The Believers’ Calling.”

In other action related to peacemaking the Assembly called for:

- The United States to end use of seven military bases in Colombia;
- The peaceful reunification of North and South Korea;
- Prayers and advocacy to end violence and warfare in Sudan;
- Restoration of sustainable agriculture in Haiti;
- Restoration of democracy in Madagascar; and
- The protection of religious minorities around the world.



Photo by Rachel Van Marter



Photo by Danny Bolin

Caroline Sherard and Michael East were elected co-moderators of the Young Adult Advisory Delegates to the 219th General Assembly.