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 two sets of persons standing for Co-Moderator.

This booklet contains the following information for all candidates standing for Co-Moderators of the 222nd General Assembly (2016): 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 presbytery 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 Co-Moderators will take place during the plenary session of the General Assembly on Saturday evening, June 18, 2016. The process that will be used can be found in Standing Rule H.1.b(4).

On Saturday morning, June 18, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., space will be provided in the pre-function A area of the Oregon Convention Center (outside the entrance to the exhibit hall) for Co-Moderator candidates or their representatives to meet commissioners, advisory delegates, and other interested parties. Draped partitions are provided and information can be displayed or distributed from these booths.

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

In Christ,

Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

May 2016
Questions for Candidates for
Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly (2016)
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 222nd General Assembly (2016) is “Hope in Our Calling” from Ephesians 1:18. The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order states, “In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope …” (F-1.0204). Where does hope transform your story?

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 will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Confession of 1967 and take final actions to add the Confession of Belhar to the Book of Confessions. How might these confessions inform how Presbyterians address the racism in the country and facilitate the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s commitment to become a church reflecting “the beloved community” devoted to full inclusion, faith, justice, hope, and witness?

4. How can the church community make room for 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 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. What is your elevator speech about what it means to be Presbyterian?
Standing together for Co-moderators of the 222nd General Assembly

WHY I’VE PARTNERED WITH JAN:

I am profoundly excited to stand with my friend, the Reverend Dr. Jan Edmiston, for Co-moderator of the 222nd General Assembly! Jan and I, after much prayer and discernment, are energized by the prospect of serving our denomination in this capacity and doing so as partners.

When we take our ordination vows, one of the Constitutional questions we are asked is if we promise to be “a friend among [our] colleagues in ministry.” In my opinion, you would be hard-pressed to find someone who embodies that promise as well as Jan does. She is, indeed, a friend among colleagues. When my own ordination process felt like one wall or obstacle after another, she encouraged me to keep going. She lifted my gifts and at times seemed to believe in them more than I did. And she has done the same for countless others.

Jan is imaginative, insightful, intelligent, and one of the church’s most ardent cheerleaders. She also lovingly pushes the church to constantly examine itself and envision new ways of being. Her hopefulness for the PC(USA)’s future is contagious, and I know that she loves this tradition as much as anyone. For that reason, I trust that our denomination would be in good, caring hands with her in leadership. I’m grateful to have her as a colleague and proud to call her my friend.

WHY I’VE PARTNERED WITH DENISE:

Denise is the future of our denomination. From the first time I read an article she wrote for the National Capital Presbytery newsletter years ago to the sermon she preached in the closing worship service at the NEXT Church National Conference in February 2016, Denise has proven herself to be a warm, brilliant pastoral leader with enormous gifts. To be perfectly honest, I have tried to convince her to move to Chicago Presbytery, but she remains called to serve in National Capital Presbytery for now.

I know her as a faithful sister in Christ, a visionary thinker, an excellent teacher and preacher, and a prophetic voice in both written and spoken word. Her family is extremely important to her and her young daughter Layla makes me excited about the future of youth ministry. (Layla is considering starting her own blog.)

Denise’s blog, Soula Scriptura: To Be Young, Gifted and Reformed (http://soulascriptura.com/), is a must read for expanding our understanding of 21st Century church world. And her Theocademy episodes (available at http://www.theocademy.com/love-an-other) give you a good idea of what stirs her soul and sets her apart as a leader in the PC(USA).
I WAS BORN, RAISED, AND EDUCATED IN CHAPEL HILL, NC, where I grew up in the University Presbyterian Church. My parents – Henry and Barbara Edmiston – were my first spiritual mentors, and I was confirmed at the age of thirteen surrounded by a community that loved and nurtured me well.

But they were not my only community of faith. I spent many weekends in Mooresville, NC with my extended family in the Prospect Presbyterian Church where I am related to almost every person in that historic cemetery. And in addition to these deep Presbyterian roots, I also met Jesus in Young Life in high school and at the Chapel Hill Bible Church in college at UNC.

Although I was from a well-churched family, I never laid eyes on a clergywoman until I went to seminary at Andover-Newton Theological School in Massachusetts in 1980. Clinical Pastoral Education was born at Andover-Newton and I imagined that – if I couldn’t be a pastor – I could be a chaplain of some kind.

However, I realized I was indeed called to parish ministry. I was ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, having received a call to serve as pastor of the Presbyterian United Church of Schaghticoke, NY in Albany Presbytery.

I served that small rural congregation for five years, during which I met my husband, the Reverend Fred Lyon. We moved to National Capital Presbytery in 1989 to serve as Designated Co-Pastors of Fairlington Presbyterian Church in Alexandria, VA. Fred and I were co-pastors for eleven years and then – after he left to pursue another call in the Presbytery – I remained as solo pastor for another eleven years.

At Fairlington, we established Computer CORE – a computer training program that educated over a thousand low income adults. We also established an emerging church community called Holy Grounds which was created in hopes of serving young adults seeking a non-traditional worshipping community.

It was at this time that I started writing my blog – A Church for Starving Artists (https://achurchforstarvingartists.wordpress.com/) which has been both a spiritual discipline and a launching pad for me to talk about 21st Century Church throughout our denomination and beyond. I also was a regular contributor for Homiletics Magazine and the Alban Institute’s Congregations magazine for several years.

Throughout my parish ministry years, I served as Moderator of the Social Justice Committee (Albany Presbytery) and the Personnel Committee (National Capital Presbytery) as well as taking leadership roles in the areas of church revitalization, new church development, and Presbytery Council in both Presbyteries.

In 2011, I followed my husband to Chicago where he had accepted a call to a congregation in Flossmoor, IL and I was hired as the Interim Associate Executive Presbyter for Ministry, staffing the Commission on Ministry and the Commission on Preparation for Ministry. In 2013 I was elected to the installed position where I have served ever since.

The greatest joys of my life include my husband Fred, our young adult children Ben, Jay, and Libby Lyon, our daughter-in-law Sahar Kazmi, and my siblings, Cham, Mike, and Sue with whom we vacation with all our spouses and children in NC every summer. As I stand for Co-moderator, I come to you as a privileged and fortunate child of God who would be honored to serve our denomination for the next two years, if elected by the 222nd General Assembly.

Jan with husband Fred (right) and their children, (from left to right) Sahar Kazmi, Ben Lyon, Libby Lyon, and Jay Lyon.
I was born in Oxford, England to James and Elaine Montgomery, who were both serving in the U.S. Air Force at the time. I deeply value my experience as a “military brat” or “third culture kid,” as it has informed my worldview and even my ministry in ways I’m still discovering. I graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, where I studied art and accidentally stumbled upon a minor in African-American Studies. After leaving Richmond, I moved to the Washington, DC area to begin a career in web design.

My religious background could be described as ecumenical. During a family visit to the States when I was a baby, I was baptized in my mother’s childhood church, Bethel AME Church in New Castle, PA. Much of my church attendance after that, however, was sporadic and mostly occurred at military chapels. At fifteen, I joined my friend’s Baptist church with some classmates and later returned to my AME roots when I moved to the DC area after college. While attending and serving in that church, I felt a tug toward ministry, but not necessarily ministry in that denomination. I enrolled at Howard University School of Divinity in response to that nudging and to explore what I might be called to do.

While at Howard, I studied under amazing Presbyterian professors, all of whom sparked my interest in the PC(USA). Being at Howard also allowed me to utilize and deepen my passion for African-American Studies, correlating it with the African-American religious experience. At the same time, I started dating my now-husband, Carter, who was attending Prince George’s Community Church, a PC(USA) congregation that had just been chartered in our area. You could say that the Spirit was conspiring to bring me into the PC(USA)! I joined PGCC and was immediately put to work, teaching Bible study, Sunday School, and providing worship leadership. I learned quickly that Presbyterians are serious about the priesthood of all believers!

I’ve had the blessing of being called to ministry in the Presbytery that nurtured my call. While under care, I served on the Presbytery’s Committee on Representation and as a Pastoral Assistant at Taiwanese Presbyterian Church of Washington, where I led the English Ministry. I also wrote for National Capital Presbytery’s monthly newsletter, which later inspired me to start my own blog, SOULa Scripture: To Be Young, Gifted, and Reformed. In 2014, I accepted a call to pastor Unity Presbyterian Church in Temple Hills, MD, and I continue to serve my Presbytery of nurture on the Leadership Council and as a Vital Signs interpretation consultant. I’m also on the NEXT Church strategy team, and I continue to write, having appeared in a number of publications and contributed to the book, There’s a Woman in the Pulpit: Christian Clergywomen Share Their Hard Days, Holy Moments and the Healing Power of Humor (Skylight Paths).

I’m very grateful to have found a home in the PC(USA) and for every encounter that led me to it. I know as firmly as I know anything that God has called me here, and that I am called here to bring all of who I am and all that I’ve experienced. I am called here for the same reason we all were: that we would enrich each other, proclaiming the gospel with the voices we’ve been given and, through our diverse experiences, perspectives, and gifts, reflect the expansive beauty of the God who created us. If elected, I and my sister Jan intend to encourage, strengthen, and protect that beauty in our diversity.
The theme of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) is “Hope in Our Calling” from Ephesians 1:18. The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order states, “In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope…” (F-1.0204). Where does hope transform your story?

Hope transforms our story in our individual narratives, our friendship, and our partnership.

One of us is a lifelong Presbyterian, raised in the tradition, ordained to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament (at a time when it was still relatively difficult to do as a woman), and has had a continuous career in a variety of settings. The other of us came to the PC(USA) as a young adult at the encouragement of seminary professors and at a church that had been chartered only a few years earlier. Our stories paint a hopeful picture because we come from places of both established Presbyterian witness and where God is doing a “new thing.” We are witnesses that Christ is calling people from a variety of experiences to serve in the Church and in this denomination specifically. Jesus is doing some exciting things in and through his church!

Additionally, that two women from different social locations, different races, different generations, and in different places in our careers would become friends is an incredibly hopeful thing. Despite our different experiences, we’ve found kinship with one another, supported each other through challenges, and promoted each other’s work and gifts. We have, literally, been agents of hope for one another. Our friendship is a testimony to the barrier-breaking love of Christ and the kind of relationships he calls us to have as members of his body. We know what the church can be at its best, because we have been that to each other.

Our discernment about whether we would stand for Co-moderators of the General Assembly brought to light our hopes for the denomination and what a partnership like ours could model for the church. We both have a deep love for and commitment to the PC(USA), which is why we dare to dream of ways the church can live into its full potential. Despite the changing religious landscape of our country, we believe that God is not finished with the PC(USA). In fact, Christ is still actively working and calling us to follow him, and we intend to do our part to ensure we answer that call.

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.

We are committed to being Co-moderators for the whole church. This is easy to do because we love God’s people and this is not easy to do because we have our own opinions and perspectives. And yet, we strive to see people – including those with whom we might disagree – through the eyes of Christ.

We come to this position as curious people who appreciate different journeys and different theological interpretations. As ambassadors, we would not only embrace the opportunities to share common bonds of faith, tell stories joyfully and pray lavishly. We would also seek to learn from the diverse people in and beyond the PC(USA).

And, in a time when we are arguably as polarized as we’ve ever been, it’s important for our members to see that its leaders are committed to the “peace, unity, and purity” of the church. We believe the church can model community amid differences in much better ways than we are currently seeing in the political square, particularly because we lay claim to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We can show society a better way – a Christ-led way – of being together.
This assembly will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Confession of 1967 and take final actions to add the Confession of Belhar to the Book of Confessions. How might these confessions inform how Presbyterians address the racism in the country and facilitate the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s commitment to become a church reflecting “the beloved community” devoted to full inclusion, faith, justice, hope, and witness?

Let’s sit for a moment with the realization that we have now had nearly fifty years with the Confession of 1967. Almost fifty years later, how has it to date informed our approach to dismantling racism and reflecting the “beloved community”? Have we lived into its call toward “the abolition of all racial discrimination,” not just in our society, but within our own walls?

In 2016, Latina/o and black public school students in the South are suspended and expelled at five times the rate of their white counterparts. The United States accounts for 5% of the world’s population, but 25% of its prison population, and most of those incarcerated are people of color. Much of the media attention around police brutality has focused on how it affects black people, but Native Americans are killed by police at higher rates than any other ethnic group. Disenfranchisement in the forms of housing discrimination, gentrification, mass incarceration, food deserts, and inequities in education, policing, and employment continue to plague communities of color. And even within our denomination, churches that aren’t predominantly white wrestle to find a place in a system that struggles to understand or respect their cultural practices and ecclesiastical language. Whatever we’ve done in the past 50 years, we’ve still got work to do.

One of the objections expressed to adding the Confession of Belhar to our Book of Confessions was that the Confession of 1967 already addressed issues of racism and reconciliation; adding Belhar would then be redundant. However, our Reformed tradition calls us to confess our faith anew in every time and every place. The Confession of Belhar is at this point over thirty years old, yet it remains relevant. Additionally, that we would have two confessions from two different times and two different parts of the world, both of which address the need for justice and reconciliation, attests to the ubiquity and persistence of the problem. In the mainline church and in the larger society, we still face many of the same challenges that we faced fifty years ago.

We hope that the addition of Belhar and the commemoration of C67 will call us anew to “experience, practice and pursue community with one another” and “to bring all [people] to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights.” We are thankful for the resources available to our congregations to help us engage in this work, namely the Being Reformed: Faith Seeking Understanding curriculi on the Belhar Confession and Race and Reconciliation, as well as a number of resources from the Office of Racial Justice Ministries. It is our prayer that more of us will take advantage of these opportunities to witness to God’s call for reconciliation.

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

If we are to make room for people to share their stories of faith, perhaps we should first take note of the stories that are currently taking up the most space. What stories and narratives are being centered in the church?

For instance, we in the church have a tendency to speak of our sisters and brothers living in poverty using language that’s distancing – “them”, “they”, “the poor”, etc. About 14% of Americans are food insecure. With that statistic in mind, if a pew in one of our churches holds ten people, one or two of those people may not know where their next meal is coming from. Jesus was right when he reminded us that we always have the poor

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1 Confession of 1967, 9.44 a
2 Confession of Belhar, section 2
3 Confession of 1967, 9.44 a
with us (Matthew 26:11), except the poor are not just “with” us; they are us.

In ways we often don’t realize, we favor and center socioeconomic privilege and promulgate the narrative that we “serve” the poor. In doing so, we ignore the socioeconomic diversity in our midst. What if we spoke of poverty in ways that move “the poor” from being a population in the abstract to our own family? This is simply an example we offer on how we might make space for the faith stories of all.

Room for people to share their faith stories is made when we take great care to acknowledge all who are under the tent and our connections to each other. What would it look like for leadership in our churches to be vulnerable enough to share about their own struggles with food insecurity, substance abuse, or intimate partner violence? What if we refrained from marginalizing these things or making them projects and instead made them personal? What if we took care to remove the shame, stigma, and invisibility that too often accompanies these human stories? How liberating that would be for our members and our communities!

As for listening to the stories of those outside the church, quite simply, the church will have to go outside of itself! And, thankfully, our congregations are doing just that. We see so many of our churches around the country who have developed partnerships with local schools, civic organizations, and worshipping communities of other faiths for a common social good. They are fostering relationships with the intent of being the kind of neighbor Christ has called us to be. This is how we listen to stories of those who are not in our church; by moving from having neighbors to being neighbors.

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

The process of peacemaking is complex and incredibly contextual. As much as we’d like to have simple answers for peacemaking, there simply are none. What we must remember as Christ’s church is that at the heart and start of any peacemaking initiative is prayer. Apart from God, we can do nothing, we simply cannot afford to ignore this essential tool. The ministry of peacemaking in our denomination is not only about projects or programs or special offerings. It is, most of all, a spiritual discipline that involves intentionality in forming and nurturing relationships with our neighbors.

Our concern is that, for many of us, the pursuit of peace has been replaced with the pursuit of our own survival as an institution. In too many spaces, we value our own comfort over the safety and security of our neighbor. We will even hesitate to travel to meetings with fellow Presbyterians if the meeting is in an unfamiliar part of town. A church that is inwardly-focused compromises its witness and effectiveness.

We want to encourage the denomination in terms of what we have been doing globally. But we also want to address the local concerns which our congregations can engage directly. Peacemaking, as we said, is contextual, and our methods are informed by our context. We should open our doors and arms to refugees on the other side of the globe, and yet we should be careful not to neglect the kid in the blighted community just five miles away – or right next door. It’s impossible to bring peace without acknowledging the injustice that tears us apart. Justice, after all, is the mother of peace. Perhaps we should ask each of our congregations this: What breaks God’s heart in your neighborhood and how can your church address that brokenness for the sake of making peace?

For more about us, visit: http://andersonedmiston.com

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“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

– Romans 15:13
February 26, 2016

Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk
Office of the General Assembly
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Re: Endorsement of Tawnya Denise Anderson as Co-Moderator, 222nd General Assembly

Dear Gradye:

At its 272nd Stated Meeting, on Saturday, February 13, 2016, the Presbytery of National Capital unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed the Reverend Tawnya Denise (Denise) Anderson as a candidate to stand for Co-Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Denise is standing with her good friend the Rev. Jan Edmiston, Associate Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Chicago.

Unlike Jan, Denise is not a cradle Presbyterian. She is an Air Force brat who was born in Oxford, England. In the U.S. she claims Hampton, Virginia as home. She came to our denomination in 2005 when as a student at Howard Divinity School, she was inspired by leaders such as Alice Bellis, Cameron Byrd, and Ed Harding, to name a few. She is married to Carter and has a little girl named Layla, who is 7.

Denise has quickly become quite a presence in National Capital Presbytery. She served as the Pastoral Assistant at the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church. She currently is pastor of Unity Presbyterian Church in Temple Hills. Previously she has been a contributor to the NCP monthly newsletter. She served on the Committee on Representation. She is an interpreter for the Church Development Commission’s work with the Church Assessment Tool, and she serves on our presbytery’s Leadership Council. At our council retreat last month, she led worship and Bible study in ways that were extraordinarily enriching. She is in a lectionary study group where she has displayed her deep insights into scripture and how it relates to issues today.

Denise has also been quite a presence beyond our presbytery. She has written for Christian Century and Presbyterian Outlook. She is one of the bloggers for Presbyterians Today. She is on the board of RevGalBlogPals and also writes her own blog entitled Soula Scriptura. She is featured in Theocademy’s new video series, "Love An Other: the Bible’s Call to Unity, Justice, and Equality." She’s on the strategy team for NEXT Church and preached at their annual conference in Atlanta.

Denise desires to stand in solidarity with people at the grass roots, and this is evident in her leadership as pastor of her congregation, which enthusiastically supports her standing for co-moderator. She also is blessed with the support of her husband and her daughter. Denise loves God and loves the church. She wants to do her part to help the church be all it can be, what God calls it to be.
Denise explains, “My call to stand for Co-Moderator if the 222nd General Assembly arises out of a desire to see the PC(USA) more fully live into the vision of the beloved community. I believe ours can be a church that embraces all who trust in Christ and are called into his family. For this reason, I actively engage in social justice issues, undergirded by a theology that claims humanity as God’s creation in God’s own image, and a Christology that recognizes Christ as the extension of God’s love to all. In standing for Co-Moderator, I hope to send the message that ours is a church for all and encourage us to actively be that kind of church. It’s for this reason that I believe I was called to the PC(USA) and remain committed to it.”

Grace and peace,

Sara M. Coe
Stated Clerk
February 17, 2016

Rev. Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk  
Office of the General Assembly  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Gradye:

The Presbytery of Chicago, with great delight, has unanimously endorsed Rev. Jan Edmiston to stand as Co-Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly. Jan is standing with her long-time friend, Rev. Denise Anderson, of National Capital Presbytery. Together Jan and Denise bring the wisdom of experience and the insight of youth to a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in transition. Jan says she was counselled not to run at this time, since there will be a new stated clerk for the Office of the General Assembly and an Interim Executive Director for the Presbyterian Mission Agency – a messy situation indeed. "It's a perfect time," Jan said. "I love the mess."

Jan is a life-long Presbyterian, born and raised in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and in the University Presbyterian Church of Chapel Hill. She spent summers at Montreat. She received her M.Div. from Andover-Newton Seminary in Boston, an unusual path for a Chapel Hill Presbyterian, at a time when it was still somewhat unusual for a woman to seek ordination. She served for five years as the pastor of the Schaghticoke Presbyterian United Church. While there she met and married Rev. Fred Lyon. Together they served for eleven years as co-pastors of the Fairlington Presbyterian Church of Alexandria, Virginia. (Fred, by the way, is also a life-long Presbyterian. His father is a former moderator of Lackawanna Presbytery.) Jan continued as solo pastor of Fairlington for eleven years more. In 2010, Jan and Fred moved to Chicago, where Jan now works as the Associate Executive Presbyter for Chicago Presbytery.

Jan and Denise bring a passion for the 21st Century Church. According to Jan, congregations that focus on the “ABCs” – attendance, building and cash – are dying. In the 21st Century, congregations are called to focus on their neighborhood and novel ways of being church. At Fairlington, Jan helped start an emergent church, Holy Grounds, that ministered to young adults who were either disaffected from the church or had no church background. Fairlington, under Jan’s leadership, trained over 3000 adults, mostly immigrants, in necessary computer skills through a non-profit they started called “Computer CORE.” Jan is also the author of the popular blog, “A Church for Starving Artists,” (https://achurchforstarvingartists.wordpress.com/) and a frequent speaker for the NEXT Church and the emergent church community.

“What breaks God’s heart in your community?” Jan asks. “That is where God is calling you.”

Please join Chicago Presbytery in honoring Jan’s call to serve as Co-Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly.

Signed,

Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Bundick  
Stated Clerk
“Moderators reconcile people and institutions in the bonds of peace both within and without the Presbyterian Church (USA) as Ambassadors of the Body of Christ.”

Ruling Elder David P. Parker and Teaching Elder Adan A. Mairena are very different people – but in a good way! David is a small town Southern lawyer. Adan is a “hands-on” minister in the streets and churches of Philadelphia. What they share is “the privilege of faith,” in Calvin’s words, which when “founded upon the Word is transmuted into confident power.”

Adan and David’s collaborative mission is Reconciliation – be it of Presbyterians, theologies and institutions within PC(USA); races, circumstances, and genders in America; the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, or in ecumenical efforts worldwide.

“Working together as Co-Moderators, we have different strengths,” says David. “We won’t strictly divide each responsibility 50/50, but will work from our strengths, over-lapping and interchanging as time and situation require.”

Adan agrees, adding “I am more of a hands-on ministry person; David is more of a gavel-wielding spokesman and board member, but we will both fill our roles on the PC(USA) Committees and accept as many pulpit, learning and celebration opportunities as we can. We are committed to serving and giving the work of being Co-Moderators our all if we are elected, respecting the voices of each Commissioner and each Advisory Delegate!”
“David and I are standing together as Co-Moderators because we fully grasp what it has taken each of us to see each other as equals and know we are incomplete without one another because that is what Christ mandates.”

Reconciliation doesn’t just happen at the snap of our fingers. It happens when the power-full and those who are power-less decide to recognize and ask to be filled with the true mysterious power of the Holy Spirit that has been there from Genesis "hovering over the waters of chaos" that God chose to put in order.

- Adan Mairena

Adan Mairena was born in Honduras but has lived virtually his entire life in the United States. Adan’s ancestors came from the mountains of Central America and his parents came to this part of the Americas in 1967. They fled Honduras for their political dissent and both became Presbyterian Church (USA) Ministers, serving churches in Texas and New Mexico.

Adan graduated in 1998 from the University of New Mexico and in 2003 from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (where he was a Theological Student Advisory Delegate at the 214th GA in 2002). He was a Lilly Resident in Ministry at Bryn Mawr (PA) Presbyterian Church.

Ordained by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in 2005, Adan is currently a Teaching Elder at both the West Kensington Ministry (“WKM”) at Norris Square and Yeadon Presbyterian Church.

WKM is in a predominantly Latino North Philadelphia neighborhood that was deemed the 2nd hungriest place in the USA in 2010. Adan lives in WKM’s manse. Yeadon is in an African American suburb southwest of the city.

“My small family was welcomed and embraced by a larger family, the PC(USA) family,” says Adan. “We come together at a common table where Christ is not only the host but, Christ is the meal, in fellowship with Christ and each other as together we face our challenges and live out the faith God has in us.”

“My hope is that we will boldly continue to be a family of faith, anchored in our time-tested tradition of meeting the Great Ends of the Church, reflecting upon who we are and courageously moving forward to who we are called to be.”

Adan has served as a Director of the Board of Pensions, but has focused on urban ministry and immigration including serving on the GA Urban Ministry Leadership/Organizing Team.

In Philadelphia, he is a member of a Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform. He partners with grass-root community based organizations, interfaith groups, law enforcement, and elected officials to improve the quality of life of the marginalized.

Adan has testified in the halls of Congress for immigrant rights, in Pennsylvania for youth sentenced to life without the possibility of parole, and has been arrested for protesting at the White House to stop the deportation of Central American children who came to the US fleeing violence and persecution.

For more on Adan and his WKM ministry, please go to http://westkensingtonministry.com/west_kensington_ministry/WKM_Pastor.html
“Adan and I share a passion for this Presbyterian Church,” says **David Parker**. “For a Southern lawyer and a Northern preacher to agree on our Answers to the Moderator questions shows our shared zeal!”

David graduated from the University of North Carolina Law School in 1979 as a Member of the Holderness Moot Court Bench and graduated Phi Beta Kappa from UNC-Chapel Hill in Economics in 1976. As a lawyer, David has tried over 4,000 cases, many while an Assistant District Attorney, and currently does business creation and financing.

“Seeing beyond the law,” says David, “to the Spirit of the law has always been a part of how I practiced. Whether it was in persuading a trial court to love mercy, or getting a developer to exceed EPA standards for the sake of Creation, I have always looked for what was needed, rather than merely what was required. My faith requires nothing less.”

David’s father’s family came to America on the Mayflower; his mother’s came in the wave of Scots-Irish immigrants to North Carolina in the 1740’s. David grew up at White Memorial Presbyterian in Raleigh, NC and has worked for progress in America through the church and politics.

David was a Commissioner to the 219th GA, Salem Presbytery Moderator and Salem Council Moderator, Mitchell Community College Board Chair, Iredell County Bar President, elected Member of the Iredell-Statesville School Board, U.S. Senate Terry Sanford Re-election Campaign Manager, and North Carolina State Democratic Party Chair in 2012.

“When you are facing a convention hall full of 1,000 political folks, most of whom seem to need to speak,” says David, “armed with only your wit, Robert’s Rules, and a little wooden mallet, you need to have the confidence of Joshua to bring it all together!”

David and his wife, Sally, an Elder, have been married for 34 years and have three adult children and one grandchild. They attend First Statesville where David serves on the Session and sings in the Choir.

David plays guitar and keyboard and has written music since his days in the UNC Men’s Glee Club, including songs for Presbyterian Pilgrimage, Covenant Network and his church choir. There is more about David at [http://www.salempresbytery.org/david-parker--pcusa-moderator-candidate.html](http://www.salempresbytery.org/david-parker--pcusa-moderator-candidate.html)

*Caveat:* Although he would like to be thought of as a broad minded, tolerant sort of man, David should be approached with caution for at least 24 hours if Duke beats Carolina in basketball.

“With 1.6 million members in 9,800 places and 55,000 trained Ministers and Elders, we in the PC(USA) can truly make a difference in the world if we have the un-timbered vision to do so.

“But at age 61, I should not be in the younger half of our members! And at 90% Euro-American, PC(USA) must implement real, dynamic, and systemic change to work effectively as a part of the Body of Christ in the world.”

- **David Parker**
Questions for Candidates for Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly (2016)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1. The theme of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) is “Hope in Our Calling” from Ephesians 1:18. The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity in the Book of Order states, “In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope ...” (F-1.0204). Where does hope transform your story?

“Podrán cortar todas las flores, pero no podrán detener la primavera” wrote Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in a poignant assurance of hope: “They can cut all the flowers / but they cannot keep Spring from coming.”

Faith regenerates us, despite setbacks and disappointments in this world: “The grass withers, and the flower falls,” as 1 Peter 1:24-25 tells us, “but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” We place our hope in the Word incarnate.

Flowers will be cut; grass will wither. Committees will bloom and fade. Institutions will expand and contract. Ministers and Elders and Moderators will come and go. But the living Spring of the Word will not be detained.

Barbara Brown Taylor, in Gospel Medicine points out that “Jesus seems to prefer working with broken people, with broken dreams, in a broken world.” Indeed, the Psalmist says “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit” (Psalm 51). The meek shall inherit the earth, not the proud. Such is the ground from which hope springs.

In Adan Mairena’s ministry, the flowers cut too soon include a four year old neighbor shot accidentally with her father’s handgun and a young man whose Sinful past tragically constricted his faithful future. The Spring comes in the testimony of African American World War II veterans and the women who faithfully lead their church, honor its past and are committed to its relevant presence today and its future. Adan’s ministry is challenged daily by the people’s despair that Spring will never come back in full flower. Adan lives, and prays, and teaches, and consoles, and nourishes, and suffers, and weeps, and forgives and is renewed by hope.

In David Parker’s world, the Great Recession wreaked havoc among the over-extended Middle Class. But, despite their earlier prayers, people are certain that they themselves have re-grown the flowers and brought back the Spring, giving scant glory to God. “Christianity” too often implies political agendas that segregate neighbors into silos of self-congratulation, empty of the diversity needed for discernment. PC(USA), in our tolerance and the discernment born of our diversity, is a hope of renewal.

And so, as Langston Hughes wrote “We are not afraid of night, / Nor days of gloom, / Nor darkness -- / Being walkers with the sun and morning.”

God, who is beyond time, knows the measure of each flower in Adan and David’s lives and in the world beyond. Spring comes eternally in the enduring, renewing life of Jesus; Satan cannot hold it back. As the David of old prayed in Psalm 33:22 “Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.”

Then, truly, “the Church, as Christ’s body, [will be] ... free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God” (F-1.0204). That is our hope and our prayer. Amen.

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.

Moderators reconcile people and institutions in the bonds of peace both within and without PC(USA) as Ambassadors of the Body of Christ.

Reconciliation begins with Moderators facilitating respectful, orderly General Assembly discussion for seven days and flows as a living stream into the other 723 days of the Moderators’ terms.

In 2 Corinthians 5:20, Paul writes “[W]e are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us: we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

“To be the voice for my African American and Latino congregations, and others like them, and to be heard in bringing the resurrection of Spring to PC(USA) is both a marvel and an awesome responsibility.”

David Parker and Adan Mairena for Co-Moderator
Dr. Martin Luther King’s prophetic voice reaches far beyond the African American churches from which his prayer for freedom rang so clearly. Adan and David live Dr. King’s dream “that one day … the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”

Dr. King believed that if we love God with our whole heart, we cannot hate one another: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”’ (Matthew 22:37)

If we love God with our soul, how can we not love one another in this Church, the body of Christ? Moderators sow peace within PC(USA) by active listening and mediating. Ambassadors question theological diversity by asking if our differences are specks in our neighbor’s eye in the nature of Matthew 7:3-5 or timbers in our own, obstructing the clarifying lens of Scripture. Moderators do not tolerate ad hominem arguments.

If we love God with our whole mind, we break down any artifice that divides us one from the other by reason of our creation or circumstance, seeing beyond the law to the life-giving Spirit. PC(USA) starts with love of God and love of each other. To immediately act on Moderator Heath Rada’s active-listening initiative, why not set two Sundays a year aside to invite Ministers and choirs from other churches into our own? Why not merge and meld PC(USA) Youth Groups and Mission projects with neighboring, diverse PC(USA) churches? Why not facilitate community discussions to get neighbors to talk with each outside the artificial world of their favorite news channels?

Moderators, as Ambassadors, sound a clear and certain clarion call of reconciliation from their “Bully Pulpits” across America, at conferences or celebrations, and in the halls of Louisville and Washington, DC and beyond.

The sacred duty of Moderators and Ambassadors is to reconcile the church, the people, and the world beyond. We are called to nothing less.

3. This assembly will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Confession of 1967 and take final actions to add the Confession of Belhar to the Book of Confessions. How might these confessions inform how Presbyterians address the racism in the country and facilitate the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s commitment to become a church reflecting “the beloved community” devoted to full inclusion, faith, justice, hope, and witness?

In the workbook on Belhar and the Confession of 1967 (“C67”), Stated Clerk Emeritus’ Kirkpatrick’s cites C67 as focusing on forgiveness and reconciliation in the world. Allan Boesak in the PC(USA) Belhar Conference in October, 2014 cited Belhar for being about forgiveness within the Church in the face of evil, as being the agape love commanded by Jesus in Matthew 22:39.

The two Confessions complement each other.

But confession comes before forgiveness. Many white Presbyterians who can trace their ancestors in America to pre-Revolutionary times, like David, find the staining shadow of slave ownership which cannot be scrubbed out merely by the good works of their descendants. David so confesses, believing in the assurance of pardon by the Grace of God that washes away all Sin.

In August, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King preached prophetically to America that he had a dream “that one day … the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.” At that table, whether for dining or Communion, will be forgiveness and reconciliation.

Two years after his Dream speech, Dr. King spoke to Presbyterians at Montreat, which PC(USA) celebrated in 2015. But racial tensions still boil over in a Satan’s stew of ignorance and godlessness in racial profiling, disproportionate imprisonment, and judging by skin color instead of character. The perishable vessel into which each of us has been poured is no cause for prejudgment.

Racism cannot hold back the Spring.

“Each and every GA Commissioner and Advisory Delegate will be respected by the Moderator and by each other. Ad hominem arguments will be quieted, politely but firmly.”
Daily, Adan works for systemic reconciliation, in both the Philadelphia African-American Suburban Church and the marginalized North Philadelphia neighborhood he ministers to. Adan has labored for immigrant rights beyond those of his Honduran ancestry, to reduce prison populations, and to strengthen community and police relationships.

David has spent over 30 years involved in the law, politics and faith in the South including being an Obama Super-Delegates in 2008 and State Democratic Party Chair in 2012 and has seen the destructive power of racism. David’s boyhood minister, Dr. Ed Pickard, migrated from Texas to Raleigh, NC with a message of love and acceptance that courses still through David’s veins. There is power in love.

The capacity for confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation are gifts from God through the Holy Spirit.

The clear lens of the Word expressed so beautifully and simply in Galatians 3:28 (“there is no longer Jew or Greek”) means that race, creed, gender, preference, financial condition, and all other divisions are timbers in our eyes, dimming our vision of God and neighbor and impairing our doing of justice, love of mercy, and humble walk with God.

Calvin wrote in the Institutes that anyone realizing the scope of their own sin would sicken from despair. But we Christians are “walkers with the sun and morning” who accept the grace of God and are assured of pardon.

And with Confession and the Assurance of Pardon by God’s grace comes reconciliation both in the church and in the world.

4. In our interactions as Presbyterians with people of other religions and faith traditions, we seek respectful dialogue 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?

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:48). Reconciliation is a commandment, even among ancient foes: “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage” (Isaiah 19:25).

But hate-mongers plead religion for bombings, abortion clinic shootings, and rabid politicians’ hate speech. Not all faith is “good faith”.

Jesus preached “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21).

Muslims are no different: Karen Armstrong explains in History of God that the call to prayer “Allahu Akbar” (God is greater) ... distinguishes between God and the rest of the reality.” Terrorists, though, sometimes pervert this statement to assert their God above Others to the escalating delight of hate-mongers.

John tells us, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1). People of faith vary in goodness. Muslims are no more monolithic than Christians or members of a race – we are each individual children of God.

As an attorney, David has Muslim clients and business partners. He has read the Quran and discussed his faith with imams on carpets in the Arabian desert, lectured on Islamic Finance in Bahrain, and addressed Mosques after Friday evening prayers on seeing beyond the law to hear the call of God to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Adan has helped lead Philadelphia’s annual Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation, ending twice at Adan’s church with an interfaith service for 500 people of all faiths. In 2010, after a Florida Pastor threatened to burn the Quran, Adan organized “The Reading of our Sacred Texts” where Pastors, Priests, Imams, and Rabbis, read from their sacred books about God’s love for all of us.

There is much more in common among the Abrahamic religions than the hate-mongers understand. Talking, breaking bread together, and respectfully observing each other’s prayers and practices are the keys to understanding, recognizing the good faith in each other and reconciliation.

"Podrán cortar todas las flores, pero no podrán detener la primavera" (“They can cut all the flowers, but they cannot keep the Spring from coming”).

- Pablo Neruda
PC(USA), with its openness to the work of the Holy Spirit and its nearly 10,000 locations in the U.S., can provide a rare sanctuary for the Abrahamic faiths to reconnect. In doing so, we can manifest our faith. First, we confess our limitations, then we ask forgiveness, and then, reconciling, we work together as led by the Holy Spirit. We hear the call of our own Peter Marshall to “Help us to make this God’s own country by living like God’s own people.” We pray for those who are said to be our enemies.

Some may say that this is too high a Mission Call for our fractured world, but if our reach does not exceed our grasp, then what’s a heaven for?

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

Is PC(USA) the Titanic, listing badly, taking on water, and under a divided Captaincy?

Or is PC(USA) a vital force among the body of Christ with a tradition of Christian leadership, openness to the power of the Holy Spirit, and a virtually unique Sanctuary for reconciling people of different races, creeds, genders and faiths?

David and Adan are very different people: David’s family descended from Mayflower Puritans, his mother’s from English and Scots-Irish settlers who arrived in Philadelphia in 1683 and migrated to North Carolina in 1747. Adan’s parents fled Honduras for their political dissent.

But Adan and David love the Presbyterian Church (USA) and will give being Co-Moderators their all.

David and Adan posed this question to new Presbyterians: why are new Christians coming to Reformed denominations from Africa, Latin and South America, and Asia? The answers show who PC(USA) is at its best:

We believe in a Sovereign God whom we cannot manipulate into letting us into the kingdom; we come to Jesus as little children come, humbling ourselves and hoping beyond hope that he will take us in his arms, lay his healing hands upon us, and bless us.

We are a connected people – connected with and loving our neighbors, with other Reformed congregations across America, with other faiths, and with the world at large.

We self-govern as a democracy – we are a priesthood of true believers governing ourselves in Faith, discerning the voice of God through our conscientious faith and in our assemblies.

We respect freedom of individual conscience, guided by Scripture – we can disagree in good faith on the issues of the day but worship together as Christians.

We are intellectually curious and believe in hard work to discern the will of God -- our curiosity and openness sometimes gets us in trouble, but we love to learn more about God’s will. And in Phyllis Tickle’s Emerging Christianity dynamic, curiosity and discernment may be the key to our continuing vital role among the body of Christ. We test ourselves to discern the will of God and to be Reformed and regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit as Trinitarians. We harken back to Moderator Rev. Jonathan Dickinson’s 1722 sermon to the Synod of Philadelphia: “We may not so much as shut out of Communion any such Dissenters as we can charitably hope Christ won’t shut out of Heaven: But should open the Doors of the Church as wide as Christ opens the Gates of heaven; and receive one another, as Christ also received us, to the Glory of God.”

We choose vitality: with God’s help, PC(USA) is and will remain a vital part of the Body of Christ and we, David Parker and Adan Mairena, will give our all in its service.
December 17, 2015

The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (USA)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Mr. Stated Clerk:

I am pleased to tell you that the Presbytery of Salem, in its stated meeting on November 7, 2015, unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed the candidacy of Ruling Elder David Payne Parker as Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Information regarding Mr. Parker is enclosed. If I may provide any further information, please let me know.

With Advent hope,

[Signature]

David Vaughan
Stated Clerk

Enclosures

c: Ms. Angie Stevens
May 18, 2016

The Reverend Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (USA)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Reverend Parsons:

This is to notify you that at its stated meeting of May 17, 2016, the Presbytery of Philadelphia unanimously voted to endorse the candidacy of the Reverend Adan Mairena, a teaching elder commissioner of the Presbytery, to stand as Co-Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly.

Rev. Mairena serves as pastor of both West Kensington Ministry, an urban missional faith community, and Yeadon Presbyterian Church, a congregation in a first-ring suburb of Philadelphia established over ninety years ago. A copy of the statement Rev. Mairena shared with the Presbytery is included with this letter as background.

As requested, his address is: Reverend Adan A. Mairena
West Kensington Ministry
2136 North Hancock Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122

May the Spirit of Pentecost rest upon you and all who will gather in Portland this Assembly, anointing the Presbyterian witness of Jesus Christ as living Lord to the Church and the world.

Blessings,

Reverend Kevin L. Porter
Stated Clerk

Cc: Ms. Angela Stevens (Program Assistant to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly)
Reverend Adan Mairena