



May 13, 2022

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 the Office of Moderator. For this assembly, we have two sets of Co-Moderator candidates.

This booklet contains the following information for all candidates standing for Co-Moderator of the 225th General Assembly (2022): photographs, biographical information, 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 them), 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.

In addition to getting to know the candidates via their booklets, The Presbyterian Outlook will be hosting "An Evening with the Outlook: Meet the candidates standing for moderator" on Thursday, June 9, 7:00 pm ET. To learn more about this event, click [here](#). Information will also be available on MyGA.

The election of the Co-Moderators will take place during the plenary session of the General Assembly on Saturday evening, June 18, 2022. The process that will be used can be found in Standing Rule H.1.c.(4).

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

In the faith that we share,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Herbert Nelson, II".

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 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2022)  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Using no more than 500 words for each response, please answer Questions 1 through 4 (required) and two additional questions.

1. The theme of the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2022) continues to be *from lament to hope* and uses Hebrews 11:1 as the inspiration - "Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see." (CEB) How do we help the church as we journey between lament and hope?
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 Louisville, a city not unlike many in this country that has seen 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 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2022) be a sign of hope to the city and the whole church?
4. The pandemic has challenged many people's concept of church and the way we are church together. How do we move forward into that new future and engage the church that is emerging? How is it different from the church that we knew? How is it the same?
5. 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?
6. 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 around the world and the ministry of welcome to refugees and immigrants?
7. 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?
8. What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?
9. What is your elevator speech about what it means to be Presbyterian?

# Fina & Marilyn



Josefina "Fina" Ahumada  
Commissioned Ruling Elder



Marilyn McKelvey Tucker-Marek  
Minister of the Word and Sacrament

지역사회에 뿌리를 두고  
성령의 감동을 받아

*Rooted in Community  
Inspired by the Spirit*

Enraizados en la comunidad  
Inspirados por el espíritu



## 225th General Assembly

### **Josefina "Fina" Ahumada**

Commissioned Ruling Elder

Presbytery de Cristo

Home church: Southside Presbyterian Church, Tucson, Arizona

Moderator and pulpit supply for Papago United Presbyterian Church on the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Moderator First Presbyterian Church, Silver City, New Mexico

Email: josefina.ahumada@asu.edu

### **Marilyn McKelvey Tucker-Marek**

Minister of the Word and Sacrament

Flint River Presbytery

Solo Pastor, Forsyth Presbyterian Church

Forsyth, GA

Campus Minister, UKirk Campus Ministry

Mercer University, Macon GA

Marilyn.Tucker@ForsythPresbyterianChurch.org



[www.facebook.com/Fina.Marilyn.225GA](https://www.facebook.com/Fina.Marilyn.225GA)

# Our call to service



**Fina:** This January, I had my “Road to Damascus” moment when I received an email message that Marilyn Tucker-Marek of Forsyth, Georgia, was seeking a partner to stand as co-moderator for the 225th General Assembly. It was an impactful moment; I certainly had thought long and hard about my decision to stand for commissioner from my presbytery, but I had not before considered standing for the role of GA co-moderator.

When stepping forward to be a commissioner candidate for Presbytery de Cristo, I shared that I strongly believe that we are called to be peacemakers. Today, we are witnessing divisions in our communities at both the local and national levels. As a commissioner, I believe I could serve as part of the union of peacemakers, listening and discerning the role of the church in this complicated and often chaotic world.

I ultimately decided to stand for co-moderator because I thought about all the possibilities of contributing to the church’s impact in the greater society and the importance of the work. I believe that our discernment of the church’s prophetic and pragmatic mission for our times is guided and influenced by the Holy Spirit. As a co-moderator, I hope to offer my experience and skills in serving the denomination.



**Marilyn:** When Flint River Presbytery elected me to serve as a minister commissioner to the General Assembly, I sensed a call to stand for co-moderator. I hope that in doing so, I will serve the denomination I love by listening widely and attentively, responding faithfully and lifting up the vitality of smaller congregations and worshiping communities so that, together, we may celebrate, learn from and better equip everyone to serve Christ.

I serve as solo pastor for a small, strong, inter-generational congregation in a rural community and as campus minister of a UKirk community that strives to offer a judgment-free zone to all its participants. Relational ministry rooted in mutual respect and shared joy in the promise of Christ’s resurrection bears witness to the Gospel and changes lives.. By serving as co-moderator, I hope to highlight the ways in which this kind of ministry enriches our denomination. As a life-long Presbyterian, I delight in our rule-by-elder way of being church. At its best, our polity enables us to discern the will of the Holy Spirit together, and our polity works best when we involve people with a wide variety of experiences, backgrounds and perspectives.

*Rooted in Community  
Inspired by the Spirit*





# Our Story

## Josefina "Fina" Ahumada



### Service in the Community of Faith

#### Current

- Home church is Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona (SSPC).
- Facilitator for the Southside Day Labor Center steering committee (SSPC community ministry).
- Moderator and pulpit supply for Papago United Presbyterian Church on the Tohono O'odham Nation.
- Moderator First Presbyterian Church, Silver City, New Mexico
- Presbyterian Campus Ministry Board, member.
- Presbytery de Cristo Mission Committee, member.
- Synod of the Southwest, Moderator of the Hispanic Ministries Coordinating Committee.
- Synod of the Southwest-member of the synod mid-council conversation task force.

#### Prior

- Presbytery de Cristo, Moderator.
- Presbytery de Cristo, Committee on Ministry, Moderator.
- Presbytery de Cristo Committee for Preparation for Ministry, member.
- Southside Presbyterian Session
- Southside Capital Campaign Committee Chair.
- Presbyterian Youth Triennium, Presbytery de Cristo 2019 Adult Mentor.
- Presbytery House of Neighborly Service Board, Chair.

### Quién Soy

Soy Chicana, the daughter of Benjamin and Carmen Ahumada. My father was an immigrant from Sinaloa, Mexico, and my mother was from Pueblo de Ysleta Tejas. From them, I learned about our Creator and to honor family and community. I share with you a few story lines about my life journey as a professional social worker and Commissioned Ruling Elder.

### My Journey

- Born in Stockton, California.
- Adopted and raised by Benjamin and Carmen.
- Los Angeles is my hometown.
- Grew up with three older brothers, who taught me the love of baseball.
- On completing my graduate studies in social welfare at UCLA, I moved to Tucson, Arizona.
- Life Partner Helen Battiste (passed 2014).
- As I wound down my career as a social worker, I transitioned to become a commissioned ruling elder in Presbytery de Cristo, Arizona



### Education, Certifications, and Licensure

- Certificate of Congregation Leadership - University of Dubuque.
- Master of Social Welfare - University of California at Los Angeles.
- BA Sociology/Chicano Studies - California State College Dominguez Hills.
- AA Accounting - Los Angeles Trade Technical College.
- Arizona State Licensed Clinical Social Worker/LCSW.
- Academy Of Certified Social Workers Certificate.



# Our Story - Fina

## Social Worker and Educator

- 2019 retired from Arizona State University School of Social Work after 20 years serving as the field education coordinator at the Tucson Campus.
- Currently serves as a faculty member for the University of Arizona/Arizona State University Interprofessional Milagro Program.
- Currently serves as an ASU field education instructor mentoring social worker students.
- Prior to ASU, practiced as a social worker in the Tucson behavioral health service community for over 20 years as a clinician and as a clinical administrator. Background in services with seriously mentally ill and psychiatric crisis services.

## Current Community Board Service

- Board Chair of the YWCA of Southern Arizona.
- Member of the UA Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families Advisory Board.

## Member of the National Association of Social Workers, Arizona Chapter

Prior NASW Service

- NASW Arizona Chapter President.
- NASW National Chapter of Presidents, Secretary-Treasurer.
- NASW National Board Member and Treasurer.

*To learn more about Fina's community service, log on to the University of Arizona Women's Plaza web site*

<https://plaza.sbs.arizona.edu/355>

Or Scan QR Code



Fina is a founding member of the Southside Worker Center, Southside Presbyterian Church community ministry- Tucson Arizona (Fina's home church.)



## Awards and Recognition

- Arizona State University College of Public Service & Community Solutions: Public Service Educator Award.
- Arizona State University School of Social Work: Apple Award, Recognition as Outstanding Field Instructor.
- Arizona State University: Ubiquity Award, Academic Contribution in Teaching Award.
- National Association of Social Workers: Transformational Educator of the Year.
- National Association of Social Workers, AZ Branch II Social Worker of the Year.
- National Association of Social Workers, AZ Chapter Lifetime Achievement Award.
- YWCA Women on the Move Award for Health Services.

*City of Tucson Proclaimed  
November 29th  
"Josefina Ahumada Day"*



Weaving Language, Spirituality & Tradition through Poetry workshop. Sponsored by Papago United Presbyterian Church and Cook Native American Ministries Foundation.



# Our Story - Fina



## Wedding

Pastor Alison Harrington Officiating Fina and Helen's Wedding.

Life partners Helen and Fina were married in New Mexico. (Marriage was not an option in Arizona.) In 2014 following cardiac surgery, Helen passed. Unfortunately, Arizona would not issue a death certificate listing Fina as Helen's spouse.

In response to this injustice, Fina became one of the plaintiffs in the landmark case brought by Lambda Legal—Majors v. Jeanes, which struck down Arizona's discriminatory marriage ban, paving the way for same-sex couples across the state to apply for marriage licenses or to have their legal out-of-state marriages recognized.

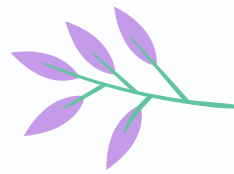
## *"The wolf will dwell with the lamb." Isaiah 11:6*

Our church and our larger society have been grappling with emotional and important issues about racism, immigration, homelessness, poverty and more. Please know that I have spent my life working in community on these issues. As a member of Southside Presbyterian Church, a commissioned ruling elder at the Papago Presbyterian Church on the Tohono O'odham reservation, a social worker, a community leader and volunteer, and a child of immigrants, I have worked on these issues in community with people of diverse races, religions, incomes, political parties, social outlooks, and nationalities.

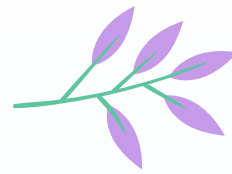
Being a follower of Jesus Christ has meant for me professing and acting on my faith. It means stepping up and stepping out, taking responsibility, and witnessing God's mercy and saving grace. For all of us it means living an ethical life and persisting in crossing racial/cultural/gender boundaries in serving others. It means being part of the church as we strive to keep our covenant with God. Being in relationship with Jesus Christ is trusting even when there is uncertainty and ambiguity. It is being thoughtful in prayer. I hope that my relationship with Jesus Christ is recognizable. It is not just my words or intentions that matter, but rather it is God's grace in my life and my follow-through and actions that I hope make a difference. Through God's grace, my actions become not boldly arrogant, but actions of accompaniment and service in bringing peace and reconciliation in this world.

The church has a unique place in our current world where so much trauma has occurred these recent years. In times of political, social, and emotional upheaval, the church is the sanctuary and touchstone for spiritual guidance and action. The church has the role of translating holy scripture into action for healing our world. In these times of discord and loss, individuals strive to find purposeful meaning in their lives. The church is to assess its readiness and capacity for serving in this post-Covid world. The church is to examine how it can be a relevant place where individuals nourish their relationship with God and grow into becoming resilient and responsive persons of faith. It is for us as the Body of Christ to be open to change and new ministries in meeting the needs of its people and the community. These are indeed challenging and exciting times for the Presbyterian Church.





## Our Story



# Marilyn McKelvey Tucker-Marek

### Childhood

- I was born in Fort Myers, FL, to parents Wendy and James.
- A month later I was baptized at Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church.
- My earliest memories include learning the song, "Every Morning is Easter Morning from Now On" at church, watching manatees come up for air in the warm south Florida waters, listening to Bible stories, and asking God for a younger sibling.
- My family moved to Montgomery, AL, when I was three and joined Immanuel Presbyterian Church.
- My sister, Hannah, was born when I was four years old.
- I call Immanuel Presbyterian Church my "village church" because they raised me. The families at Immanuel didn't all look like mine. There were gay couples and straight couples, couples on second marriages and couples going through divorce, families with biological children and families with adopted children, intergenerational families and interracial families, single parents and single adults, neurotypical and neurodivergent people. And together these people sought to build a community of welcome, supporting one another as we sought to love God and love neighbor.



Marilyn with younger sister Hannah, March 1994.



Marilyn, presented for baptism as an infant by her parents Wendy Knox Tucker and James Tucker at Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church.

### Youth

- I attended public school in Montgomery, AL, the cradle of the Confederacy and the birthplace of the Bus Boycott which saw the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. launched into leadership in the Civil Rights Movement. The city's history taught me the power of confronting the sins of our past to seek a more just present.
- At Montreat Youth Conference I heard keynoters, including Bruce Reyes-Chow and J. Herbert Nelson, invite young people to be the church, not of tomorrow, but today.
- I was confirmed at Immanuel Presbyterian Church when I was 14, and ordained and installed to a one-year youth-elder term on the session when I was 17.
- In the summer of 2006, I served communion at the opening worship of the 217th General Assembly of the PCUSA, hosted by the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley in Birmingham, AL.



Marilyn (far left) with her confirmation class.



# Our Story - Marilyn



*Marilyn pictured on vacation with her family.  
from left to right: James Tucker (father), Hannah Knox Tucker (sister), Ken Marek (husband), Marilyn, and Wendy Knox Tucker (mother)*

## College

- As a member of the PCUSA campus ministry and a youth ministry intern at First Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa, AL, I began to discern a call to seminary.
- I first experienced the resources, opportunities, and challenges that a larger church context offers while working and worshipping at First Presbyterian, Tuscaloosa.
- Co-directing the College Conference at Montreat in 2011, I had the joy of crafting a conference for hundreds with a brilliant planning team.
- I graduated from the University of Alabama in spring 2011. That same month a mile-wide tornado tore its way through Tuscaloosa, killing more than fifty people and destroying hundreds of homes and businesses. I spent weeks of that summer helping my college town begin cleaning up the destruction and making way for the rebuilding to come.



*Marilyn at dinner with UKirk campus ministry students at Mercer University.*

## Seminary

- Returning to small church life and my south Florida roots for a ministry internship at Peace Presbyterian Church in Lakewood Ranch, FL, I began to sense a call to solo pastor work and small church ministry.
- As a clinical pastoral education intern at St. Joseph's Hospital in Atlanta I learned the power of offering a calm presence and a safe space for people as they faced a health crisis or the death of a loved one.
- I graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary with a Masters of Divinity in 2014. My life is richly blessed by the friendships which began in seminary.



*Marilyn and ruling elders at Forsyth Presbyterian Church pray for and lay hands on a new class of elders being ordained and installed.*



*Marilyn and ruling elders at Forsyth Presbyterian Church pray for and lay hands on a new class of elders being ordained and installed.*





# Our Story - Marilyn

## Ministry

- In 2014 I was ordained as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, and installed as the solo pastor at Forsyth Presbyterian Church in Forsyth, GA, a small, intergenerational congregation in Flint River Presbytery.
- I married my husband Ken Marek in December 2014, and we have two dogs.
- In 2016 I became the founding pastor of UKirk campus ministry at Mercer University.
- Serving these two ministries gives me the opportunity to walk with people at every phase of life as they grow as disciples of Christ. When I teach, preach, listen, pray, and serve with these two faith communities I am privileged to be welcomed into their stories and lives.
- I regularly write and lead Bible studies. I published one study, "The Bread of Life, Jesus Satisfies Spiritual Hunger," with Smyth & Hewlys Publishing's Connections. Another study, "Joseph, An Unexpected Story," written and produced with Rev. Joseph Taber, is available on YouTube and can be viewed with the QR code below:



"Joseph, An Unexpected Story,"  
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnN2SVdGJbTNiQnBNkYa3-JuxA2QHx3lCh>

- In 2018 I served as Moderator of Flint River Presbytery. I was honored to have the trust and respect of my friends and colleagues who elected me.
- I also have served Flint River Presbytery on its Advisory Board, Committee on Ministry, Committee on Mission and Evangelism, and Committee on Preparation for Ministry.
- In 2019 I began to explore the spiritual practice of pilgrimage, walking the St. Cuthbert Way in southern Scotland/northern England. In 2021 I used my sabbatical to write a devotional book to accompany that path, and will lead a small group from Flint River Presbytery on the pilgrimage June 5-15, 2022.
- In January 2020 I was elected to serve as the minister commissioner from Flint River Presbytery to the 225th General Assembly, and began to sense a call to stand for Co-moderator. While the format of General Assembly and the role of Co-moderator have changed since then, my sense of call remains.



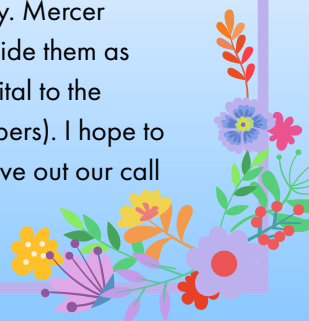
*Marilyn with her husband, Ken Marek.  
Below their dogs, Holly and Ivy.*

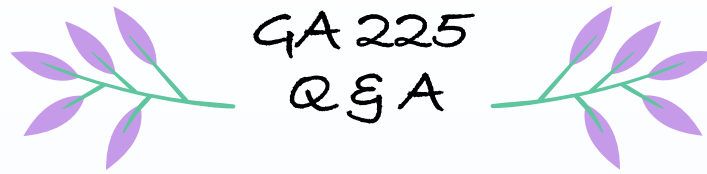


*Marilyn, officiating the wedding of Kathryn and Hayden Hancock.*

*Christ said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name,  
I am there among them." Matthew 18:20*

Forsyth Presbyterian Church is a small and strong inter-generational congregation in a rural part of our country. Mercer campus ministry offers a judgment-free zone to the students with whom we minister, seeking to support and guide them as they grow as disciples and young adults. I believe the voices of these ministries, and others like them, remain vital to the well-being of our entire denomination. The majority of PCUSA congregations are small (fewer than 300 members). I hope to use my relational ministry experience to help our denomination celebrate our varied gifts and collaborate to live out our call to be the body of Christ in the world.





**Q 1** The theme of the 225th General Assembly (2022) continues to be from lament to hope and uses Hebrews 11:1 as the inspiration - "Faith is the reality of what we hope for, the proof of what we don't see." (CEB) How do we help the church as we journey between lament and hope?

### **Fina**

"How do we help the church as we journey between lament and hope?" We help by equipping ourselves to be able to work with one another as the Body of Christ. We help ourselves by getting out of our own way, backing away from an over-dependence on channels of protocols and procedures. Our challenge is to ground ourselves with more people-oriented solutions. The gospel shows us how to engage with one another. We were given the imperative to "love one another". We have the capacity to meet this imperative by becoming adaptive leaders who see the "person" behind the complex and complicated issues of the day.

Our strength as adaptive Presbyterians is our emphasis on learning and continuous growth. We are not afraid to try new ideas. Observe how in our 225th assembly we have adapted to the pandemic challenges. We are trying out an advanced hybrid assembly. As commissioners, many of us have been challenged by technology, and yet here we are navigating the "MyGA".

How do we help the church? We help one another by embracing that we are the Body of Christ. We are not meant to work alone in the dark. We answer God's call by standing with one another as the light comes upon us.

In Matthew's Gospel, we are told that we are the light of the world: "You are the world's light—it is impossible to hide a town built on the top of a hill. People do not light a lamp and put it under a bucket. They put it on a lampstand, and it gives light for everybody in the house." We are intended to burn our light brightly. We as the Body of Christ help one another to journey from the darkness of lamentation to the light of hope. We help by searching and finding the flint and steel to ignite a spark that builds into a flame illuminating our hilltop.

Metaphorically, the dilemma that we have as a people is our difficulty in recognizing the raw materials from which to build a fire that could light the way to resolving complex and complicated issues. So often we ignore potential allies who could serve as support in solving an issue or standing with us in a time of turmoil. There are times that we can be so locked into our formulas for problem solving that we stifle our own creativity. We fail to envision solutions that could be at our fingertips.

**The beauty of our Presbyterian experience is our call to work with one another as community.** The organizational model of single-figure, top-down leadership, which is so often used in the greater society is largely obsolete. In our church experience, we have learned that by being in community with one another, we nourish one another and emerge as adaptive leaders who have the capacity for transformational ministry and missional work.

**Q2** 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.



## Marilyn

After the General Assembly, the Co-moderators have the important work of acting as the interpreters of the work done by the General Assembly. They do this by helping the entire denomination understand our shared commitments and our diverse experiences; telling stories of meaningful, life-changing ministries; and inspiring, encouraging, celebrating, and energizing the communities with whom they connect. **The Co-moderators are called to speak words of comfort in times of crisis, words of prophesy in the face of oppression, and words of celebration in moments of joy.**

As a life-long Presbyterian, I have had the privilege of hearing several GA Moderators speak. Marj Carpenter awed me with the stories she told about how the church lives and breathes and witnesses to Jesus Christ in so many different circumstances around the world. Bruce Reyes-Chow challenged me when he taught the Montreat Youth Conference about the opportunity for ministry presented by social media. Joan Gray took the time to listen to me and my concerns as a seminary student at Columbia Theological Seminary when she served as interim Dean of Students and cast a vision of a more ecumenical seminary community. Jan Edmiston and Denise Anderson inspired me with the camaraderie, authenticity, and honesty they brought to every keynote and conversation in which they participated during the Moderators training weekend I attended just before serving as Moderator of Flint River Presbytery. And Cindy Kohlmann showed me the power and resources true friendships offer one's ministry and the life-changing power of just one conversation during her visit to Flint River Presbytery when she served as Co-moderator.

I hope to follow the example set by these Moderators and Co-moderators, and so many others. Should we be called upon to serve, Fina Ahumada and I look forward to connecting with congregations, presbyteries, and other groups both in person and online. We are excited that the new tools for connection and ministry gleaned during the pandemic will enable us to be present with many groups, small and large, near and far, celebrating the blessings of being a part of a connectional church. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic we look forward to traveling safely and connecting in person.

We hope to have the opportunity to listen widely, encourage creatively, support faithfully, and pray steadfastly with the denomination we already love and serve.

Fina and I both serve in smaller ministry contexts. We believe the skills, gifts, vitality, and witness of smaller communities have the power to inspire and guide congregations and ministries of any size.

**I hope that by bringing the personal perspective of a small-church pastor and campus minister to the role of Co-moderator, I will be able to support and celebrate such ministries' particular gifts.**

**Q 3** This assembly is taking place in Louisville, a city not unlike many in this country that has seen 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 225th General Assembly (2022) be a sign of hope to the city and the whole church?

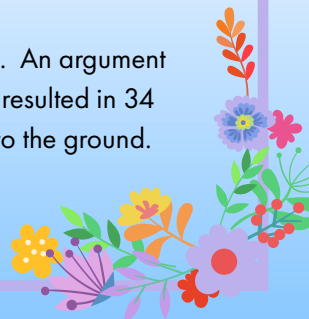
## Fina

On hearing this question, I would rephrase the question as the following:

"How do we show up in Louisville and in this world?"

As a nineteen-year-old, I had the most profound experience that would influence my choices as a young adult. It was the Los Angeles Watts riots. It was the explosive response of a community under siege by the oppressive social and public policies of the day. Let me summarize for you the events that occurred that summer years ago.

One hot August afternoon in 1965, a young Black man was pulled over by the police for reckless driving. An argument escalated into a fight. The roadside police-stop mushroomed into major civil unrest that last six days and resulted in 34 deaths, and over \$40 million worth of property damage. Store fronts and people's homes were burned to the ground. There were 1,032 injuries and 3,438 arrests.



At the time of the Watts riot, I was living with my family in South Central Los Angeles. I saw people beaten, and I saw the fires. It was horrifying. The experience left me confused and wondering about what had gone wrong and what could make things right. How could such troubles be made right?

I learned that to turn around these significant “troubles” one had to turn fear into courage and to ally with others in promoting a common cause. John Lewis said it best, “Get in good trouble, necessary trouble, and help redeem the soul of America.” Faith and courage are our starting points. In the public square, we find a need for people with hope who navigate and address the experience of “trouble.” We as a community of faith are meant to be in the public space and to stand with each other as we face “trouble.” We may not always be invited into the public square, so we must take the initiative. We show up in the public space as empathetic listeners. We don’t show up to lecture or to fix things. We show up as interested and curious people ready to be allies. We show up to exchange our ideas about hope. We show up to see what hope looks like for the marginalized. We show up to talk “hope” even in the midst of lamentations. We just keep showing up. What is most impactful is our stamina for being present. Being present in community is following Jesus’ incarnational approach. We connect and we engage not for the purpose of filling the pews but rather to stir up “good trouble” to stir up radical hope.

**Q 4** The pandemic has challenged many people’s concept of church and the way we are church together. How do we move forward into that new future and engage the church that is emerging? How is it different from the church that we knew? How is it the same?

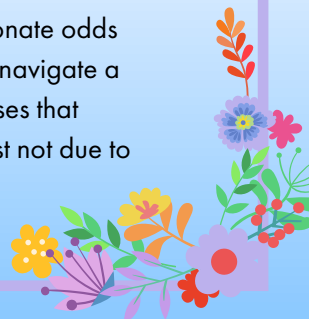
### **Marilyn**

**The church is the same in every age, for Christ promises, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Matthew 18:20) And, “we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.” (Romans 12:5)** Yet many congregations woke up one day in March 2020 to find that many of their familiar rhythms and modes of connecting for worship, fellowship, and service had to shift significantly.

Some congregations moved worship and fellowship online, enabling them to draw new community members into the body of Christ. Others found a hybrid model of in-person and online worked best, enabling them to reach members who could not participate in person. Some congregations whose members largely worked providing essential, in-person services found that the risks of gathering in-person for worship paled in comparison to the risks their members took every day for work and continued to meet in person. And other congregations knew that moving online was not feasible for their members. They found other creative solutions including worshipping by phone, gathering in smaller in-person groups for worship, or revitalizing a tradition of connecting by snail-mail.

During the pandemic many congregations mourned the deaths of some of their dearest members, adding deep personal grief for lost loved ones to the already heavy emotional toll of the changes brought about by the pandemic. Two congregations in my area have struggled after burying a beloved member who also served as the long-term clerk of session. Each death not only left behind bereaved loved ones, but also created a deep gap in the congregation’s institutional memory.

Other congregations felt the painful political divides in our culture as members found themselves at passionate odds with people with whom they had ministered and worshipped for years. These congregations struggled to navigate a path that cared for the needs and convictions of all their members. Some congregations found compromises that supported everyone. Other congregations found that the deepest hurts were in mourning relationships lost not due to



death, but to disagreement.

And some congregations saw their community's needs, both those already in existence and those created by the pandemic, and they jumped into action. They fed the hungry, advocated for those who faced a loss of housing, and opened their buildings and internet access for students learning remotely.

As the church emerges from all these griefs, changes, and struggles, we share a sense of loss but also a sense of resilience and hope.

**The pandemic changed our communities, but it has not ended Christ's church. Congregations are emerging from the pandemic with a new set of skills and a new commitment to ministering to the needs they now see more clearly within their communities.**

**Q 5** 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?

### **Marilyn**

Our polity creates space for people to share their stories of faith and enables those stories to inform the ministry of Christ's church. By governing ourselves at all levels of the denomination with councils comprised of ministers and ruling elders, people with a wide variety of perspectives, experiences, and gifts bring their different stories to their shared ministry. I have seen session members listen attentively and faithfully to one another, and I have seen them change both their opinions and choices because of the stories their fellow elders shared.

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9) **All members of the church have a responsibility to share the work of proclaiming God's mighty acts. I find the joy of this proclamation happens easily in small group contexts where trusting relationships create a holy space. There, believers intentionally choose to interpret their experiences through a lens of faith.**

In the campus ministry I serve, the phrase judgment-free zone captures our community's ethos.

This judgment-free zone means we share a commitment to listen with respect, refrain from judgmental or hurtful comments, and freely offer support to one another.

Each week a participant shares a word or phrase for the community to hold in prayer on their behalf. These words or phrases vary widely and the students also are invited to share the story accompanying the request. This time of prayer offers the community the opportunity to hear one another's stories and to minister to and celebrate with one another. By creating a safe space within which to share stories, the campus ministry participants quickly build trusting and supportive relationships with one another.

**These shared values foster community and empower its participants to minister to other people with whom they interact on campus.** For example, one student told me of asking her fellow group project members to commit to creating a judgment-free zone as they worked together. She said once they all agreed to the judgment-free zone, everyone's work got better. Another student told me of feeling the Holy Spirit's presence when he asked a friend going through a complicated and difficult time to name one word or phrase to hold in prayer. That one question helped the friend focus on the issue at the center of the whole situation, beginning a process of resolution.

Our stories authentically and honestly told and attentively and faithfully heard, are ministry. When the faith community equips itself with the skill of storytelling and listening and takes that skill into the world, God uses it to do marvelous





things.

**Q 7** 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?

### Fina

The General Assembly of 211 (1999) affirmed the Presbyterian Principles for Interfaith Dialogue: "We are called to work with others in our pluralistic society for the well-being of our world and for justice, peace, and the sustainability of creation. We do so in the faith that, through God's Spirit, the Church is a sign and means of God's intention for the wholeness and unity of humankind and of all creation." (Presbyterian USA Web Site)

Over the years as a denomination, we Presbyterians have progressed in building our capacity for interfaith relationships and interreligious initiatives. I want to acknowledge the significant work that has been accomplished in this area of interfaith practice, especially in these current times in which we see the rise of intergroup conflict and hate in the greater society. Now more than ever, we are called to be engaged in intergroup dialogue and to witness Christ's love and mercy in the world. It is through dialogue that we listen and learn. We do not dialogue to change our neighbor, but rather to acknowledge our neighbor.

Where do we start? We start at the beginning of all human relationships. We start with the basic skills of being empathetic and being a good communicator. It is as simple and as complex as that.

We start with imaging oneself in another's shoes. We call this social empathy. **Our ability to walk in another's shoes is critical to building relationships.** We know this because it is the foundation of our relationships with families and friends. It is the stuff of our pastoral care in our congregations. When we as persons of faith move across interfaith boundaries, we may find ourselves at a loss. We may experience ourselves not being quite attuned with people who have a different spiritual perspective from our own, who may have a different scripture that guides their lives. In our interfaith encounters, we may be tempted to proselytize. We may get ourselves tangled up in miscommunications with the person, though this is not our original intent. But with God's grace, we can become good in our dialogue. We can grow and come to be open to our neighbor. Yes, there are times when we as Presbyterians can be solely task-oriented getting things done, marking off the checklist in our efforts to be helpful, but this approach often does not fully communicate to our neighbor that they are valued, especially in an era of societal "isms".

Our interfaith dialogue strengthens our ability to love all people by seeing them as God's beloved, as we evolve to see one other as human and not as objects to be managed. Our interfaith dialogue, engaged with empathy and openness, will be the antidote to oppressive actions, which in the past may have been conducted in the name of religion. In our ordinary-day lives, our interfaith dialogue with our neighbor will become the well from which peacemaking springs.

지역사회에 뿌리를 두고  
성령의 감동을 받아

*Rooted in Community  
Inspired by the Spirit*

Enraizados en la comunidad  
Inspirados por el espíritu





**Presbytery de Cristo**

***Serving Christ, Serving Congregations, Caring for “the least of these”***

April 27, 2022

### **Endorsement of CP Josefina Ahumada for Co-Moderator of the General Assembly**

I write with great enthusiasm to endorse Josefina (Fina) Ahumada for the office of Co-Moderator of the General Assembly! Fina has served as the Presbytery de Cristo's Moderator (even serving a second year because of COVID) as well as Moderator of our Commission on Ministry, and a member of our Mission Committee. As she approached retirement as a social worker and faculty member at the Arizona State University School of Social Work, Fina enrolled in the Dubuque Theological Seminary online program for Commissioned Pastors. She currently serves as Moderator and part-time preacher of our Native American congregation in Sells, Arizona and as Moderator of our congregation in Silver City, New Mexico, which is undergoing a season of discernment toward congregational revitalization. She has led the elders and members of the Papago United Presbyterian Church in Sells to develop a much-needed renovation plan and facilitated initial fund-raising for phase one of the project (over \$100,00). Fina is beloved and respected in Presbytery de Cristo.

Fina is one of those people who can be described as a force of nature: a gentle breeze in summer when encouraging colleagues and pastors, yet also a gale force for social justice. As a member of the ASU faculty responsible for placing interns, Fina has impacted social services throughout Tucson and Southern Arizona. Her clarity of purpose and vocational integrity led her to be honored by the student body as the faculty member they wanted to hear at their graduation. In the South Tucson community, Fina has been a stalwart in supporting The House of Neighborly Service (aka, “The House”) and helped facilitate the presbytery's relinquishing administrative duties to the YWCA so The House could not only continue but expand its operations and service to the community. As a member of Southside Presbyterian Church, Fina both serves in its refugee and sanctuary ministries and leads as chair of its capital campaign that led to an expansion of their ability to provide ministry for homeless persons and day laborers. Fina is beloved and respected in Tucson.

Fina's tremendous strength is built on the foundation of her personal integrity, deep spirituality, and practiced self-awareness. She honors from where she comes (South Central L.A.) and from whom she comes (the daughter of Mexican father and Native American mother). Living in the shadow of the U of A, Fina yet roots for her beloved UCLA Bruins, where she is an alumna. Having found a home in Arizona, she yet roots, roots, roots for her Dodgers. She embraces her gifts of experience and knowledge yet bears them with humility and self-reflection. She is not only a tireless worker *in* the church but a tireless worker *for* the Church. She understands what it means to live as a follower of Jesus, an advocate for justice, and servant of “the least of these.” Fina is my beloved and respected friend.

Grace and peace,

Brad Munroe

Presbytery Pastor

Presbyteries of Grand Canyon and de Cristo





# **The Synod of the Southwest**

**The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

**in New Mexico and Arizona**

**5901 Wyoming Blvd., NE - #J-319, Albuquerque, NM 87109**

**(520) 791-9600**

**[www.synodsw.org](http://www.synodsw.org)**

May 2, 2022

To Whom It May Concern

I write this letter to support and endorse the candidacy of Ruling Elder Josefina Ahumada to serve as the Co-Moderator of the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (the PCUSA).

I have had the pleasure of knowing and interacting with Ms. Ahumada for well over 10 years, in my capacity as the servant leader of the Synod of the Southwest. She is gentle, clear, passionate and committed to the witness of the PCUSA as it is manifested in this part of God's world. She has been particularly helpful in identifying issues and leading the way as we in the Synod of the Southwest seek to better serve our Hispanic/Latinx communities.

In particular, her desire to lift up and serve God's marginalized siblings in society has been a lifelong commitment, both professionally and spiritually. Thus, in every aspect of her life as a member of the PCUSA she has always been willing to answer God's call to service in any way that will best serve God's people, especially those on the fringes of society.

I believe at this particular time she is being called to serve the more inclusive expression of the PCUSA as Co-Moderator of the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and I cannot imagine an individual better suited for such service than Josefina.

Sincerely,

Conrad M. Rocha  
Stated Clerk/Executive Elder



Debra Trogaskis, Executive Presbyter  
Rebecca Willis, Stated Clerk  
Toni Hatfield, Bookkeeper  
Elizabeth Cantrell, Office Manager

April 26, 2022

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

RE: Letter of Endorsement for Co-Moderator Candidate Marilyn Tucker-Marek

I am pleased to inform you that at the stated meeting of August 7, 2021, Flint River Presbytery enthusiastically endorsed Rev. Marilyn Tucker-Marek to stand for Co-Moderator for the 2022 General Assembly. Rev. Tucker-Marek is our presbytery's teaching elder commissioner to the General Assembly.

Rev. Tucker-Marek is the pastor of Forsyth Presbyterian Church in Forsyth, Georgia, and serves as the Campus Minister at Mercer University. She has served as the moderator of our presbytery, a member of our Advisory Board, and as a faithful committee member, most recently serving on the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

She has a strong witness for the Lord Jesus Christ and is committed to serving Him in whatever way He directs. She is a faithful member of our presbytery and can always be counted upon when a need arises. Her knowledge of polity and parliamentary procedure would serve our denomination well should she and her Co-Moderator candidate be elected. She has a wonderfully positive and enthusiastic personality and is willing to step out of her "comfort zone" in service to God and His people.

Our presbytery will be in prayer for the upcoming Assembly and all the holy work to be done within the communion of the saints. We offer our strong support for Rev. Tucker-Marek as she seeks to serve our denomination as Co-Moderator.

Blessings and peace,  
*Rebecca F. Willis*  
Rebecca F. Willis, Stated Clerk  
Flint River Presbytery

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

826 Liberty Expressway, S. E., Albany, Georgia 31705  
Phone: 229-435-9726



VOTE FOR YOUR  
CO-MODERATORS

RUTH &  
SANTANA - GRACE  
SHAVON  
STARLING - LOUIS



# UNBOUNDED we thrive

A THEOLOGY OF FLOURISHING // A THEOLOGY OF THE TABLE  
A THEOLOGY OF GOD'S CALLING



Unbounded We Thrive



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# RUTH &

## SANTANA - GRACE

# SHAVON

## STARLING - LOUIS



We bring you greetings with the peace of Christ expressed in some of the languages that have enriched and shaped our spiritual journeys. They are Pentecost reminders of how the Gospel of Jesus Christ binds us across language, race and culture, calling us out of our places of comfort, daring us to step into the abyss of the unknown – embodying what it means to live into the words of our platform **“UNBOUNDED WE THRIVE.”**

As a people of faith, we stand before an opportunity that is both exhilarating and exhausting. We are challenged to recognize where God is calling us. We are challenged to consider the lessons of the past two years. We are challenged to consider what we will need in order to be a faithful and relevant voice for the Gospel at this time and place. There is much we can focus on framed by scarcity and judgment.

But we believe in the **THEOLOGY OF FLOURISHING** – recognizing that God has always challenged us out of those spaces. From Moses, Esther, the disciples, Mary, Paul and others – God has always called us out of our assumptions into new possibilities.

We believe in the **THEOLOGY OF THE TABLE** – a conviction acknowledging we are better together – struggling with not only coming to the Christ table, not only inviting others

THE PEACE OF CHRIST!

그리스도의 평화

جيسم السلام

LA PAZ DE CRISTO

สันติสุขของพระคริสต์

LA PACE DI CRISTO

LA PAIX DU CHRIST

キリストの平和

AMANI YA KRISTO

LAPÈ KRIS LA

ANG KAPAYAPAN NI KRISTO

AMANI YA KRISTO KATIKA

基督的平安

A PAZ DE CRISTO

DAMAI KRISTUS

یت م السلام ی یک جیسم

نما اک جیسم یم ناویئات

to that table, but also staying at that table – working together on all those sins that separate us from God and one another, plaguing us with the pain of racism and injustice.

Above all, we are grateful for the **THEOLOGY OF GOD'S CALLING** – a profound awareness that in the midst of all our challenges, God continues to call individuals with hearts and voices that say “yes” to the Gospel. God is not done with us or this church!

It is this hope we bring into the 225th General Assembly – From Lament to Hope. We believe it is time to claim that hope together. So, as we share a bit of who we are, we invite you into our journey with words attributed to Patrick Overton who defines faith and hope in this manner. “When you walk to the edge of all the light you have and take the first step into the darkness of the unknown, you must believe that one of two things happen: there will be something solid for you to stand upon, or you will be taught how to fly.” Well siblings, let's fly together - on eagle's wings.

Ruth & Shavon

STANDING TOGETHER IN HOPE  
AS CO-MODERATOR CANDIDATES

## ABOUT

# Ruth



- Born in NYC; Raised in Queens
- Grew up in Hispanic Presbyterian Churches - La Encrucijada and San Lucas
- BA College of New Rochelle - Psychology
- Recipient, National Urban Fellowship
- Masters in Public Administration - Baruch College, CUNY (1984)
- National League of Cities, DC - Associate for Training, Economic Development and International Relations (1983-1986)
- Director, The Bridge Association, Rome, Italy (1986 -1991) bringing public officials together from USA and Europe
- Worked ecumenically with Episcopalians, Moravians, Waldensians and Methodists in US and Italy
- Master in Divinity, Princeton, NJ (1994)
- Served as Associate for Adult Discipleship, First Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem, PA (1994-2005)
- Doctor of Ministry Studies - San Francisco Theological Seminary
- Executive Presbyter:
  - Presbytery of San Gabriel, Southern CA (2005-2013)
  - Presbytery of Philadelphia (2014-Present)
- National Boards:
  - Princeton Theological Seminary (12 years)
  - Presbyterian Foundation (8 years)
- Published in various books, blogs, articles and commentaries
- National and Regional Event Speaker; conference and retreats leader
- Loves to travel with Edward, swim, write, and kickbox
- Married 35 years to Rev. Dr. Edward Santana-Grace; Mom to Dakota Santana-Grace and stepson David Grace; Grandma to Mia - 11, Sophia - 7 (parents Lani and David) and baby Talia (parents Benedetta and David)

## ABOUT

# Shavon



- Born and raised in St. Petersburg, FL
- Daughter of Trinity Presbyterian and Lakeview Presbyterian Churches in St. Petersburg
- BA St. Leo University - MacDill AFB Campus - Psychology
- Discovered call to ordained ministry working as church office administrator, campus ministry intern, and ecumenical community organizing office administrator
- Former Armed Forces Active Duty Spouse - US Coast Guard
- Master in Divinity, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA - Honors in Practical Theology (2013)
- Organized the establishment of The SPACE - Sanctuary for Prayer and Creative Expression
- Served as Pastor of
  - First Presbyterian Church, Midwest City, OK and
  - Meadowlake Presbyterian Church, NC
- Served as Co-Pastor and Pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church, RI
- Current Senior Pastor of Memorial Presbyterian Church - Charlotte, NC
- National Leadership:
  - Leadership Innovation Team for The Presbyterian Mission Agency
  - NEXT Church
  - National Committee for The Self Development of People
  - Co-Creative Director GA225 Worship
- Loves to listen and share wisdom, maintain her streak on wordle, dance, listen to 90's R&B - New Edition Sing-a-long anyone?, watch funny reels, and worship... Yep. Truly.
- Written articles and faith formation curriculum for Christian publications, church leadership consultant, workshops, facilitated collaborative learning spaces, certified antiracism facilitator.
- Conference Preacher: Montreat Youth Conference Preacher, Summer Preaching Series: MoRanch Women's Conference
- Married for 16 years to her person Kirk Louis; Mama to her favorite kiddos in the world Sariah 13 and Kamden Louis 5. Granddaughter of Delores - the first love of her life.



# Sense of call

## RUTH

My sense of call has been framed by a light that has broken into my life before I knew it existed. Contrary to the white light often portrayed in pictures, the light I've experienced has been more like that of the aurora borealis. It is a light that whispers in the night, that dances boldly and is reflected in colors that can't be contained. I've often said the light has 'Latina DNA' as it rhythmically moves in the darkness. This light reflects the grace and incarnation of Christ breaking into my life with profound hope.

It is that hope that brings me to stand for Co-Moderator with my sister Shavon. In what has felt like a spiritual sprint, Shavon and I have found an extraordinary bond in our love for the Church of Jesus Christ, especially as it is embodied in our congregations and worshipping communities. What has struck me most about this new relationship is that notwithstanding the real and present pain around us, we both individually bear within our souls a sense of gratitude and joy coupled with an indefatigable energy. It is our hope and prayer that we can share this hope with our siblings throughout our denomination and the world. It would be a privilege to serve as faithful ambassadors to this extraordinary covenantal community known as the PCUSA.

We believe the Gospel has something powerful to say before the challenges of all that would separate us from God and one another. We believe the teachings of Jesus compel us to make right the broken spaces framed by this moment in history - from climate change, economic injustice, poverty, war - to the dual pandemics of COVID and racism, along with all other isms challenging how we view one another. We believe that God's powerful Spirit is on the move in the midst of it all, inviting us all to be prophets and priests at this time in history - a season of re-formation. We are being called out of the tombs of darkness - into a dancing light, freeing us to be creative agents of Gospel hope in the world - believing that "Unbounded we thrive."





# Sense of call

## SHAVON

Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

I sense God's call to be available to stand as co-moderator of the 2022 General Assembly of the PCUSA alongside Rev. Ruth Santana-Grace as a part of my calling to be a Teaching Elder. I believe I am being beckoned by the Holy to serve as a commissioner. I am so confident in my sense of call that I'm able to say, without any expectations, "Here I am, Lord".

I have shared about the holy nudges palpable in conversations about this calling to serve as GA Moderator. These nudges have quietly accompanied me over the past 17 years, 9 of those in ordained ministry and the remainder as I worked in different capacities within the PCUSA church. These nudges occurred most notably during conversations when I became keenly aware of my strange curiosity in how the Holy presented a discernible call to siblings who have previously stood for the GA Moderator role.

I could feel the twinge of a calling to stand in the mundane task of registering my pc-biz account. And I remember at that time feeling a bit frustrated because I had no idea what to do with those recurring twinges. So, I prayed the following prayer I have come to love in my times of unclarity: "Lord, I don't know what to do with these twinges. If you want me to do something, I need you to make it happen". For about a month, I was content with sensing no call to move forward. To my surprise, I was even at peace with what I thought was God's answer for me to not stand.

But on March 18 of this year, my new lovely sister Ruth Santana-Grace reached out to me, and I immediately sensed that this was confirmation of the call to remain curious and available

Since Ruth's first call, a sense of "simpatico" emerged. We have been in constant contact, and the vision and calling continues to be more and more vivid.



This miracle of unknown siblings becoming friends and mutual supporters has been affirming to me and has served as a beautiful example of God's New Life of abundance being at hand.

Ruth and I share a love and passion for the church - our spiritual community for Christian vocation - our communion of denominational siblings - a love for the Church Universal and The Children of God of all faith paths.

We share a joyful call to be available to walk with our siblings with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. I have been amazed by the affirmation by our loved ones, by our ministry settings, and by our colleagues. We have even had the chance to be introduced to each other's ministry communities and families.

I mention these details because God has always spoken to me in a beautiful swirl of personal and communal messages. I have found joy serving on national and local church leadership within the PCUSA committed to developing collaborative power with others from a theology of flourishing.

Where joy and justice intersect - where creativity and cooperation connect - these are the spaces where I feel called to be available in this season of my ministry.

And standing as co-moderator with The Rev. Ruth Santan-Grace is right where I am called to stand.

Siblings, I thank you for answering your call to be commissioners, advisory delegates, observers or on-lookers. Your spiritual energy in prayers, dreams and visions; your actions as the church collective - these inspire me to do the same for the glory of The Triune God.

I am because we are. - Ubuntu





# Question #1

THE THEME OF THE 225TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2022) CONTINUES TO BE FROM LAMENT TO HOPE AND USES HEBREWS 11:1 AS THE INSPIRATION - "FAITH IS THE REALITY OF WHAT WE HOPE FOR, THE PROOF OF WHAT WE DON'T SEE." (CEB) HOW DO WE HELP THE CHURCH AS WE JOURNEY BETWEEN LAMENT AND HOPE?

*Holding space in our spirits, minds, and bodies to truly lament is an act of faithful hope. It trusts that we are safe enough to outwardly share what is inwardly real.*

## RUTH

The theme from lament to hope frames the narrative of the people of God throughout human history. We are a people bound by songs of laments echoing across centuries. N.T. Wright speaks of lament as a form of praise recognizing an intimate relationship between God and humanity while also participating in the pain of others. It is the voice of a people who find themselves in a common struggle -- crying out "How long Oh Lord, Will you forget me forever?" (Psalm 13).

The sounds of our laments are formed by the losses and grief brought upon us by a relentless pandemic. Our lyrics speak of the broken spaces of our time - a bold renewed racism, economic injustice, poverty, increased violence with a language of hate, along with an exhaustion tempting us to surrender to hopelessness. I personally lost relatives while encountering the pain of suicide and isolation. It has been 'quite the day' - these past two years. I have personally cried how "How long Oh Lord"

But these laments allow us to join our voices in boldness. They escort us into the valley, compelling us to "see, hear, know" the truth of our time so that together our spirits and our witness might be released - to heal and find strength to join God on the journey of redemption and restoration. And so we lament in hope - believing that God's "mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning, ... therefore I will hope in the Lord." [Lamentation 3:20-23]. Lament is not the final word. It frees us to hope - "unbounded we thrive."

## SHAVON

I pray that as General Assembly 225, we will embrace the beauty of the spiritual journey between lament and hope with our faith in Jesus Christ to buoy us from dehumanizing dismay as we pray, worship, meet, discern, and vote. We have an opportunity to respond to the beautiful and broken world as we open ourselves to practices and postures that help us be aligned with what Jesus is up to in the world. To do this, we will need to be open to the truths that are evident in lament and hope.

In lament, our bodies testify to the impact of suffering upon us. Holding space in our spirits, minds, and bodies to truly lament is an act of faithful hope. It trusts that we are safe enough to outwardly share what is inwardly real.

Lamenting is truth-sharing. As Presbyterians, lamenting is trusting The Triune God with our longings for healing, justice, joy, wholeness, and shalom for ourselves, neighbors, and all of creation. We can be encouraged that The One with perfect faith and perfect hope saw, heard, felt, and was moved to lament in community. "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

GA 225, might we witness our faith with the church that we love in the groaning, moaning, weeping, wailing, rocking, tapping, grimacing, sighing, or lamenting in other forms that could birth forth clearer, hope-filled visions for the healing and wholeness possible through Jesus Christ, who still cries with us and calls us to new life like Lazarus? Unbounded, we thrive.



# Question #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.**

## SHAVON

It's a joy to be able to spiritually and tangibly support each other as a connectional church. Ruth and I have discovered this anew in our standing together.

Should we prevail we would bear witness to ways the Presbyterian Church (USA) celebrates that the unity of The Holy speaking with us in community in ways that call all of us to be more faithful followers of Jesus.

I have and would continue to savor the joy of embodying Jesus' love, justice, and humility in the places the Holy Spirit sends us.

The ambassadorial responsibilities of the office of Moderator of the General Assembly reflect our shared Christian vocation to show up and listen to each other's stories. We are called to be Good News bearers as we learn from the Word of God and as we connect with the prayers, testimonies, laments, and joys of those we are called to be in community with in this world.

While the individuals and institutions we encounter as Moderators might be unfamiliar to us cerebrally, the ways in which we are all called to be connected with each other's journeys is very familiar on the heart-to-heart level that we all participate in as the people of God.

It is increasingly important that relationality be centered at every level of ministry. It is at the table - literally and virtually - that we gather to be nourished by the communion of coming together to co-create with God more world peace than we could foster in isolation.

## RUTH

As we emerge from this season of physical isolation, one of the greatest gifts the co-moderators can offer is the gift of "seeing and hearing." I love the theological conviction of how we are known by our God - "before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." (Jeremiah 1:5) It is in this knowing that we can find encouragement and renewal.

In my ministry, I have the privilege of having a macro-glimpse of the world I serve. I get to see how the faithful of our worshipping communities lean into their calls - embracing the theology of flourishing (as opposed to scarcity). Their stories fuel my spirit - encouraging me to keep on pressing on. I believe these stories are the heart of our witness across our nation and beyond. They bring us joy and hope. They are 'resurrection sightings,' reminding us of God's grace in the midst of it all.

As ambassador to our denomination, I would learn of and carry that joy and hope into our many sacred conversations and engagements. I would encourage the creative thinking that this season has required of us. I would engage the courageous conversations that continue to challenge us. Both Shavon and I have witnessed the transformational power of Christ in the midst of one of the hardest seasons in our lifetime. This transformational power is best expressed through the building up of relationships and the telling of our sacred stories.

Jesus incarnationally used storytelling as his primary way of connecting to the people around him. As ambassadors, Shavon and I would want to broaden our connections with one another by learning of and celebrating the "sacred story of us." These stories of faithful efforts are like a balm - soothing the depth of our souls with wisdom and possibilities. We would be privileged to be narrators of our covenantal story - bringing compassion, humor, grace and love as together we carry one another in prayer.

*This transformational power  
is best expressed through  
the building up of  
relationships and the telling  
of our sacred stories.*

# Question #3

**THIS ASSEMBLY IS TAKING PLACE IN LOUISVILLE, A CITY NOT UNLIKE MANY IN THIS COUNTRY THAT HAS SEEN 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 225TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2022) BE A SIGN OF HOPE TO THE CITY AND THE WHOLE CHURCH?**

## RUTH

Urban centers have historically played a significant role in the Biblical narrative. The new heaven and new earth takes on the form of a holy city (Revelation 21). Urban settings continue to be economic and cultural centers – providing a synergy of life while also being plagued by violence and poverty. Louisville is reflective of this reality.

As a child of urban centers – personally formed in the cities of New York, Washington, DC, Rome and Florence, Italy, Los Angeles and now Philadelphia, I have a deep appreciation for the complexities of the urban narrative. It's my prayer we will bring an open heart and holy curiosity into Louisville – seeking to understand their unique challenges and opportunities. I am confident that the gatherings around Juneteenth will remind us of the holy work still before us.

I pray we'll carry our learnings home - with a renewed commitment to be repairers of the breach – seeking out justice through partnerships with siblings in the suburbs; by leaning into ecumenical relationships; by engaging in dialogue with those in public service.

God is at work – redeeming the city as the place of new life and resurrection hope. The words of the song "God of this City" come to mind – "For greater things have yet to come and greater things are still to be done in this City." May we together - the faithful in cities, suburbs and rural spaces - find ways to bring healing into all those places where people gather.

## SHAVON

I appreciate this question but I think it is really important to acknowledge that GA is not happening in Louisville, but actually happening everywhere the commissioners, advisory delegates, and observers find themselves which includes Louisville but also many other locations - cities, towns, unincorporated lands where violence and injustice exists as well.

A theology of flourishing embraces the abundant joy of knowing that gathering in the power of The Holy Spirit is a remarkable sign of hope all by itself. Jesus says to us, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." [Matthew 18:20]. Our varying embodiments collected for shalom building work and worship is a sign of God's calling and sustaining hope being active in the world right now.

And still I recognize that our in-person parts of the hybrid GA are grounded in Louisville, KY. There are many ways in which the time spent in Louisville is a huge opportunity for the PCUSA to listen and learn from this vibrant, evolving, lamenting and hopeful community and take it with us.

The birthplace of Muhammad Ali, The Louisville Slugger, George Clooney, and Jennifer Lawrence is also the place of heartbreak in light of the unjust killing of Breonna Taylor by police with a no-knock warrant.

What we can offer as a sign of hope in the limited time our feet are on the sacred ground called Louisville once stewarded by the Cherokee, Iroquois, and Shawnee peoples is the love of Christ in the forms of compassion, celebration, curiosity, and prayers.

*A theology of flourishing  
embraces the abundant joy  
of knowing that gathering  
in the power of The Holy Spirit  
is a remarkable sign of  
hope all by itself.*



# Question #4

**THE PANDEMIC HAS CHALLENGED MANY PEOPLE'S CONCEPT OF CHURCH AND THE WAY WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER. HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD INTO THAT NEW FUTURE AND ENGAGE THE CHURCH THAT IS EMERGING? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE CHURCH THAT WE KNEW? HOW IS IT THE SAME?**

## RUTH

At an already vulnerable moment in history for mainline churches, COVID19 thrust us into a re-examination of how we view ourselves as church. In a seismic-like movement, we pivoted from our traditional seven deadly words – “we never did it that way before” – to embracing seven words of determination – “we must find a way to witness.” This commitment to discovering new ways of incarnational presence led to what was once unthinkable. The church left the building! We confronted our edifice complex, no longer confining our ministry to bricks and mortar.

I had a front row seat as pastors of small and larger churches leaned into this new challenge – embracing digital platforms, simultaneously serving as directors, producers, choreographers and actors. Coming alongside our congregations as they rose to this moment was extraordinary. A new stewardship of time, talent and treasure was birthed as we learned to pray, worship, break bread in ways reflecting a new understanding of self. We celebrated the inclusivity technology seemed to provide. What a blessing – there's no going back!

But as Easter 2022 demonstrated, very little replaces the kind of energy organically birthed through the gift of incarnation. Pastors shared how they wept as they experienced the energy and spirit brought back into their sanctuaries. It is clear we will not return to how we did church before. We will now seek a new balance - using digital platforms in ways that enhance our witness, understanding the unparalleled power of presence in the incarnation.

## SHAVON

Reformed and always being reformed. We are emerging, called to move together and stay connected in the call of the double love commandment.

#1 The Call to Love God remains.

Our greatest joy of the church is to Love God with our whole selves - heart, soul, mind and strength. [Mark 12:30]

#2 The Call to Love People remains.

We continue to love our neighbor as ourself. [Mark 12:31]

During the pandemic and social injustice eruptions the church's unchanged upward -outward- inward calling to love, hope, evolve, pivot, and lament all that has been lost - people and patterns - came into stark relief during the time of the pandemic.

We will move forward together remembering we are connected by the holy breath within our lungs as we're compelled to find other ways of worshiping God. We tried new things. But when we could no longer gather in our worship buildings to hold hands, give hugs, high fives, and fist pumps or even gather to mourn those who passed from this life to the next, we had to find alternative gathering spaces that required unfamiliar technology. Unable to sing songs of comfort, we found recordings and shared resources across congregations and communities.

Though not always technically perfect, it was faithful.

Collectively we were stretched in resources, patience, energy and hope. We hit the wall. We pushed through. We questioned. We pivoted. We hit new walls. We rested. We quit. We started anew.

And we were joyful when things came together better than we thought they would.

We found grace. Grace found us. Grace that allows us to love God and God's creation.

*A new stewardship of time, talent and treasure was birthed as we learned to pray, worship, break bread in ways reflecting a new understanding of self.*

# Question #5

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?

## SHAVON

Church community is full of diverse contexts and cultures. We flourish together by practicing relationship-building skills that foster intercultural spaces where listening and sharing our unique stories is normalized and valued. Sharing our perspectives and listening intently to others requires an open heart. It's holy ground where we walk humbly with our God.

A practical way to listen to faith stories - stories of what is holy and sacred to the other - is to embody practices that engage our theology of the table. Gather at the table for a meal or a delicious exchange of ideas, inspirations, visions, laments, or hopes. Gather at the table outside of the church's property in God's world. Gather at virtual tables in online spaces. And wherever we gather, we listen not only with our ears but most importantly with our hearts.

Another practical way for Jesus' followers to open their hearts and spirits to hear the holy testimonies of each other is to value the need for testimony time in our worship and spiritual formation settings. For some of us, this means reconnecting to our historical roots and traditions. For others, it means discovering the joy of evangelism and witnessing - proclaiming the Good News in authentic and honoring ways.

Lastly, when we are interested in hearing the revelations of faith and spirituality of others we can Google it, or ask Siri or Alexa. Discover dynamic resources - art, literature, music, film, social media - outlets that people use to testify about what is speaking to their spirits and igniting their passions.

*Our journeys together  
provide us with the  
opportunity to connect  
our story to the larger  
story of God's relentless  
love and faithfulness*

## RUTH

As I consider this question, perhaps a place to start would be to reframe what we understand as stories of faith. I grew up unaware I had a story of faith. My story didn't fit into the image I had of what that meant. I thought a story of faith needed to be framed with biblical language. It took me too many years before realizing and claiming my story. My story is framed by everyday struggles and language. It reflects my wrestling with God through sexual abuse, dropping out of college, loss of child at birth, the humility of a brief failed marriage, and challenges of racism. It also reflects the presence of healing hands along the journey - hands carrying me through pain into places of possibilities.

These stories are out there - ordinary people with stories of courage and resilience shaped by a faith they carry within. We need to access those stories. The Theology of The Table compels us to invite and make room for those whose sounds and identities are different from our own. This is risky business - we don't always like engaging those who are different, but it is what Jesus modeled in his ministry.

And I have found that allowing the journeys of others to shape our journeys - is one of the greatest privileges we are offered. Our journeys together provide us with the opportunity to connect our story to the larger story of God's relentless love and faithfulness - of which our stories are a part.

*Sharing our perspectives and  
listening intently to others requires  
an open heart. It's holy ground where  
we walk humbly with our God.*



# Question #6

WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU  
HAVE FOR IDENTIFYING NEW  
DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF FAITHFUL LEADERSHIP FOR  
THE MISSION OF CHRIST?

## SHAVON

Ruth and I celebrate the theology of God's calling. There is joy witnessing siblings say "Here I AM, Lord" when led to lead a class, a conversation, a council, or a committee. We all carry unique visions, dreams, wisdom, laments, and hopes. Therefore, we all can invite the community to move in new ways with faithful following of Jesus - we ALL lead.

Wise faith leaders emerge in the care of the community of saints that see and love them. But the church is not always equitable in the types of wisdom we value. Leaders, particularly in underrepresented communities, can be aided by Christian community where authenticity is valued over perfection.

Perfectionism in leadership often means idealizing certain giftings that we have traditionally attributed to historically overrepresented people.

In the church especially with the disruptions of the pandemic, many of our congregations are struggling to connect and reconnect with engaged leadership. My suggestion is that we ask more questions that expand our shared value for different leadership skills, experiences, and embodiments. Questions like: How can we play, have fun, and embrace creative thoughts that move us beyond either/or thinking? Can we celebrate the courage to name power dynamics and passions? Could we learn the gifts of intercultural competency which lets us acknowledge and move through our cultural blind spots that might prevent us from seeing the blessings in our midst?

By asking curious questions, we might be more adaptive and more just as we identify and empower more joyful leaders of God's people to see themselves and each other as called and capable. And by God's Grace celebrate the beautiful priesthood of all believers.

## RUTH

This question affirms that God is on the move - inviting individuals of all walks of life to serve as ambassadors of Gospel hope. Shavon and I have called this the Theology of God's Calling. We are moved by how gifted individuals continue to say "yes" to God's call to serve in ministry. How we equip those leaders for this rapidly changing church matters.

As someone who works with cohorts of seminarians, I am encouraged by recent developments at our seminaries. There is an intentional shift acknowledging the importance of equipping leaders for a rapidly changing church - a church that perpetually lives in a liminal space. It's that space between the here-and-not-yet with no clear road map on how to proceed. In response, seminaries are creating spaces for focused learning on current concerns - the environment, urban centers, new church development, youth ministry, public policy and more. These programs allow pastors to lean into areas of interest and relevance, offering tools to strengthen their faithful leadership.

At the local church level, we have not always offered a wholistic approach to training our officers. We are challenged to find a way to integrate the need for understanding our governance and theological understanding with healthy emotional and spiritual leadership. We are invited by the Spirit to lean into creative thinking - "building while we fly." The spirit of our leadership is what impacts the spirit of a church system. An engaged healthy leadership can navigate their way into new seasons of ministry.

*Wise faith leaders  
emerge in the care of  
the community of saints  
that see and love them.*





PRESBYTERY of PHILADELPHIA

CHRIST'S WORK ♦ OUR WITNESS

March 29, 2022

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Dear Rev. Dr. Nelson,

It is indeed my joy and privilege to inform you that at a called meeting held this morning, the Presbytery of Philadelphia unanimously voted to approve the recommendation of our Leadership Collegium (i.e., Council) to endorse the candidacy of our Executive Presbyter, the Reverend Ruth Faith Santana-Grace to stand for Co-Moderator of the 225th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

We have been blessed by Ruth's leadership over the last eight years as her considerable relational gifts and her ability to inspire congregations to embrace their sense of mission have transformed our covenant community. It is our prayer that Ruth's candidacy will be an opportunity for the larger Church to live into the vision of hope Ruth incarnates and seeks to share -- both for the congregations of the PC(USA), the communities where God has called us, and the world.

We look forward to embarking on this journey alongside Ruth and her Co-Moderator candidate, if the way be clear, the Reverend Shavon Starling-Louis of the Presbytery of Charlotte (Pastor, Memorial Presbyterian Church), and the moving of the Holy Spirit through this upcoming General Assembly.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns, or if more is required of us to formalize this notification.

Gratitude and Blessings for your Service,

*Kevin L. Porter*

Rev. Kevin L. Porter  
Stated Clerk  
Presbytery of Philadelphia



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May 2, 2022

Office of The General Assembly  
The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk  
Presbyterian Church USA  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202

Dear Reverend Nelson,

It is our pleasure to inform you that the congregation of Memorial Presbyterian Church endorses the candidacy of Teaching Elder Shavon Starling-Louis for Co-Moderator of the 225<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. In a called congregational meeting, the congregation was given the opportunity to hear about the position, as well as to ask questions. The congregation voted overwhelmingly to support her.

While her experience with us has been short, she has brought creative thought and action in Word and deed to our congregation. She not only serves the congregation and the Presbytery of Charlotte, but reaches out to the community.

Her love for God is exhibited in the preparation of her sermons, as well as the outreach she provides for members. She has a welcoming spirit which radiates in her general demeanor.

She avails herself of opportunities to provide growth for the church. Having served as Liaison, Teaching Elder for three churches, Next Church Movement, Anti-Racism team, Reverend Starling-Louis does not limit herself. She has an excellent relationship with the Charlotte Presbytery.

Reverend Starling-Louis is trusted by her colleagues who not only seek her counsel, but respect her insight. She is a strategic thinker who will ably serve as a change agent for the church in general.

Her serving as Co-Moderator will be an asset to the Church.

Sincerely,

Joyce Cooke Woodard, Ed.D. Clerk of Session